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USING TECHNOLOGY TO ENHANCE READING SKILLS IN THE DIGITAL AGE

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By the late 20th century, an explosion of excellent children's literature worked its way into the classroom. Now, at the beginning of the 21st century, electronic books are beginning to compete with or potentially replace paper-based forms of text.

Throughout history each of these reading materials has somehow led to readers comprehending text. Thus when considering any new materials that should be adopted in reading instruction, such as electronic reading devices, comprehension should be considered a primary factor. If electronic reading devices are to be adopted, they should lead to better comprehension than the previous paper-based text materials used.

With advancements in technology, the format and style of reading text is in the process of evolving. One form of multimedia—the e-book— allows readers to use different modes such as listening, speaking, and viewing to comprehend what they are reading [1]. The era of digital text is upon us, which means the materials being used to read and comprehend are evolving.

New 21st century technology reading devices now have the capability to engage readers through multimodalities. Progressive changes are beginning to take place within classrooms. Electronic devices such as computers, laptops, Smart Boards, electronic-books, Kindles, and iPods are being introduced to students and in many cases teachers as well. They may allow students to more efficiently and effectively read a piece of text that they may not have been able to understand if not for these quick convenient applications. The introduction of handheld e-book readers such as the Kindle or iPad suggest that the approach to reading is changing; because of technology readers are coming to comprehend through engaging new and multiple modalities [2].

Therefore education needs to assess reading materials and their effectiveness, and if necessary, adapt new materials in order to progress. In order to meet the needs of literacy development for today's children, several researchers and educational authorities argue that traditional classroom teaching styles must be modified. Schools need to act on this notion and, instead of continuing traditional means of teaching, need to utilize technology within the classroom as a foundation to reinforce the interest and motivation of literacy engagement. Several teachers and researchers argue that by adopting technology into the classroom, educators will provide more efficient and relevant education to their students. Teachers are increasingly encouraged to use various forms of technology within the classroom which the newly revised National Educational Standards for teachers provide a framework for transitioning schools from industrial to digital places of learning [3].

Such technologies include PowerPoint presentations, online communication systems, online research, electronic discussion boards, and multimedia teaching techniques within the classroom. Teachers are encouraged to download e-books, use digitally interactive reading activities, and learn to how to best utilize these sources for literacy development. Although most schools currently do not have the financial means to purchase tablets or other hand-held electronics, most schools offer computers that teachers may use for classroom lessons. Schools may either have a room or hallway designated for

computers, or may only have computers within the school's library. Schools usually have access to enough computers for each student within a single class, or to share with a partner. Teachers can have students access e-books through an e-book website, or the educator could download a CD-ROM story onto the computer prior to the classroom session. It is reported that it is the responsibility of educators to integrate the use of technology into literacy instruction and the entire language development curricula.[4]

One of the central purposes of reading is comprehension, or to create meaning of the words being read. Paper-based text has been the primary source from which people have read for the last century. Recently, electronic readers have gained popularity. It is clear that these electronic reading devices are motivating to adult and children readers alike due to their high demand and extensive popularity. However, if educators are to adapt these readers into their curriculum, then research should be done about how these electronic readers impact students' reading comprehension.

Quantitative data about three classes were collected and analyzed according to the results of two reading comprehension tests and the performance showed during one month of study. The data gathered from the comprehension assessments was quantitative data used to measure whether or not the electronic devices impacted reading comprehension based upon average group scores. The survey and participant observational field notes provided qualitative data that gave insight into whether it is effective to use technology for reading instruction in the classroom.

Individual results of the electronic and the paper-based comprehension assessments were compared across the three groups. Information was also noted as to how students scored on an individual basis. To determine the impact of the electronic devices with internet connection for the entire class, statistical significance was also calculated.

The qualitative data collected from the post survey was also put into excel and categorized according to the questions that were asked. In order to know participant's opinion about the electronic devices report was taken and they answered whether it was effective for their reading comprehension. The data for the observational field notes were organized according to the features and resources that some of the students were observed using during the study. For example, the researcher recorded the number of students using the instant definitions, online dictionary and explanations of the reader's mistakes offered on the webpage.

On Day1 of the study there were 22 students in 9A class, 21 students in 10A class and 22 students in 10B class who participated in reading comprehension test 1. According to the results, 9A class scored an average score of 14,9 points , 10A class scored an average score of 15,7 points and 10B class scored an average score of 15,9 points. To determine the impact of the electronic devices with internet connection for the entire class, statistical significance was also calculated . Each student's individual score and the performance during the study were observed to provide a more detailed and accurate report of how students progressed on the electronic devices in comparison to their previous reading assessment's result. All participants had 20 lessons of practicing online reading activities.

On the last day of the study, the performance of 9A class was 78,95 points out of 100 , 10A class had 78,36 points out of 100 and 10B had 79,22 points out of 100. And on Day 30 of the study there were 22 students in 9A class, 21 students in 10A class and 22 students in 10B class who participated in reading comprehension test 2. The results shows that 9A class scored an average score of 18,4 points, 10A class scored an average score of 18,6 points and 10B class scored an average score of 19,8 points. The maximum average score for both reading comprehension tests was 24 points

Using technology in the classroom can be very beneficial for students. It provides them with the opportunity to be actively engaged in their learning and allows them to have control over what they are learning. It provides them with opportunities to work with other students and also provides the teacher a chance to work with students and provide them with a unique learning experience. Using technology can be helpful for the learners of English language and teachers should consider integrating technology into their classroom.

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