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The Usefulness of the Telegram App in Learning English as a Foreign Language: Teachers and Students Voices

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Abstract

The study attempted to investigate the effectiveness of the Telegram application (app) in learning English as a foreign language for undergraduate EFL learners. The study looked at how Telegram app constraints EFL learners experience when utilizing Telegram in learning a foreign language. This research, using a descriptive-diagnostic research approach, used a questionnaire and semi-structured interviews to collect the data from 40 students and 20 teachers at Najran University which were chosen through a stratified sampling technique. The results revealed that both teachers and students think that Telegram can highly improve learning English as a foreign language. The results also showed the participant (student, teacher) played a role in varying the study sample's responses in favor of teachers. The findings of the interview show that many students struggle to learn the English language through Telegram due to constraints like device compatibility, health issues, lack of motivation, loneliness, distraction, and difficulty in uploading and downloading files, often unable to receive feedback or academic assistance due to technical staff and training issues. The results of this study have implications for teaching and learning English that can motivate both instructors and students to use social media-based tools.

Keywords: Telegram, English as a Foreign Language, Telegram Features, EFL Learners

INTRODUCTION

Every educational system's primary objective is effective teaching and learning. When learning maintains keeping up with the most recent technological advancements, this objective can be accomplished. Different areas of education are not an exception to the sudden developments in technology use over the past few decades. The widespread use of online learning makes it necessary to include new technology in language instruction. Mobile-assisted language learning (MALL) in general and multimedia apps like Telegram or WhatsApp in particular, open new perspectives in English learning and instruction. A business visionary and a software engineer from Berlin, Pavel and Nikolai Durov, founded the well-known internet program Telegram in 2013. Telegram is an application that is easy for users to use. One of the best tools for education and pleasure, Telegram is a social network that is rapidly gaining popularity. Computer technologies have been impacted by rapid development and significant improvements for more than ten years. Unlike WhatsApp, this software allows you to download and receive a variety of documents with different file types. Telegram is a multifeature program that works on Windows, Macintosh, iOS, and Android mobile devices. Sari (2017) explored Telegram as a multi-device compatible communication app with inexpensive multimedia that permits real-time audio-visual interactions. Furthermore, this inexpensive program utilizes "Wireless Fidelity", so when in a wireless fidelity area, instant messaging doesn't cost extra data. Users of the app can set up various class groups to enable participation in discussions and debates in a learning environment. A study by Iqbal et al. (2020) found that the Telegram mobile application has many benefits, such as simple accessibility to educational materials, the capacity to subscribe to an unlimited number of users, and the ability to store files of all types and sizes. They discovered that the application allows students to participate in collaborative learning while maintaining their well-being and protecting their security in their studies with medical students. However, they also mentioned several disadvantages, such as a difficult user interface, an abundance of information, and a propensity to divert students, which wastes time away from learning. E-books and virtual classrooms are only two examples of how technological advancements have impacted education. It influences learners from varied backgrounds in both positive and negative ways. According to Aghajani and Adloo (2018), teaching by telegraph

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application is more effective than teaching in person. Participants learning on Telegram were discovered to have somewhat higher scores than in person. This study indicated that there were substantial differences in overall language skills, content, organization, vocabulary, language use, and mechanics when comparisons were conducted within the participants. The findings also showed that the students' opinions toward telegram learning were favorable. Ibrahim et al. (2016) claim that Telegram is a very useful tool for the development of the whole teaching and learning process due to its many benefits. The outcomes demonstrated that Telegram could improve learning and foster deep relationships between learners and instructors. The study also showed that Telegram simplified the process of learning through the exchange of knowledge, with access to the internet being the biggest downside. Alodwan (2021) explored how Telegram affected the growth of writing abilities in EFL students. The results demonstrated that using Telegram causes statistically significant changes between the mean proficiency in students' scores of the experimental group and the control group. The study also showed that participants in Telegram collaborative writing groups performed better than those in face-to-face collaborative writing groups. Sarvari (2019) asserted that the Telegram app helped bridge the communication gap between the teacher and the absent students. Instructors made use of the Telegram social media tool to monitor learners' development. They also used the data to plan future instruction. It served as inspiration for and support for aspiring learners. Another technology that is used for social media through Telegram is BOT, a platform for third-party developers, which was introduced in June 2015. A Telegram account called BOT is run by a machine (robot). Users can browse and give commands when conversing with a BOT thanks to a new BOT menu that Telegram introduced in June 2021. Speed and security are given top priority in Telegram, a cloud-based instant messaging application. The goal of Telegram is to make it simpler for users to send text messages, music, videos, images, and stickers securely (Aryadillah, 2020). The accessibility of this BOT makes it a potentially intriguing medium. The best characteristics of a portable BOT are used in this manual to help learners have more experience with studying Basic English. Telegram helps students create narrative texts more effectively. It contributes to the use of BOT features. Due to the fact that it was developed by the @botfather function of Telegram's BOT Maker, this feature is dependent. To establish Telegram channels and interactive learning resources, @botfather can create any BOT based on the user's specifications. Finally, an extremely unique element of the Telegram app is a chatbot called "Writenglish" which was created by the researcher. Students with a foundational level of English should be able to understand the narrative content in this BOT. From the first to the last meeting, Writenglish offers a menu choice with content in the form of video explanations concerning story-driven information. Provide a link to a video with captions in English that tells story impressions in the form of animated films, themed stories, folklore, fairy tales, and other stories to help students improve their academic abilities. The purpose of this study is to ascertain how effectively the Telegram apps work for learning English as a foreign language. It also examines the constraints that EFL students encountered when using the Telegram app for foreign-language acquisition. The study to be specific intend to achieve the following objectives:

- To explore students and teachers views about Telegram's usefulness in learning English as a foreign language
- To find out any significant differences attributed to the study sample's participant role (student, teacher)
- To discover the constraints that EFL learners experience when utilizing Telegram in learning English as a foreign language

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The History and Future Of E-Learning (Theory)

Elliott Masie originally used the term "e-learning" in his 1999 keynote address at the TechLearn Conference. E-learning is used to create, share, choose, administer, and enhance education. He further characterized the letter 'e' in e-learning as the experiential dimension of instruction, which comprises participation, interest, simulation, and practice (Lin, C., 2021, September 9). The use of educational technology and its design can improve effective learning, as shown by e-learning theory, which is based on cognitive science concepts (David,

2015; Wang, 2012). The Cognitive Load Theory served as the foundation for the theory's development (Sweller et.al, 2019). Cognitive load theory, defined by David (2015) as "the amount of mental effort involved in working memory" during a task, can be divided into three categories: germane, intrinsic, and extraneous activity. It is crucial to balance these three types of load to foster learning efficiency because the working memory has limited ability and the brain will experience stress if learners are exposed to excessive information, leading to inefficient learning (Clark et al., 2005). E-learning theory includes these kinds of cognitive loads in addition to design concepts and technology. Because it stresses how technology can be used and adapted to offer new learning opportunities and to support successful learning, e-learning theory is a part of connectivism's grand theory since it places a focus on how technology may be utilized and enhanced to foster both successful and novel educational experiences.

PREVIOUS STUDIES

As a study topic and as a useful instructional tool for language learning, Telegram is currently gaining popularity. The efficacy of Telegram instructional tools to enhance educational outcomes can be used to explain their rising popularity. Many recently published studies have delved into the potential of Telegram. Shaden (2022) investigated Telegram as a teaching tool for secondary school students, and the results showed that the majority of learners thought the Telegram app was a useful aid in acquiring the English language, particularly in language skills. These results were crucial in aiding the researcher in developing a case on the efficiency of the Telegram app in the teaching and learning of English. According to earlier studies, the Telegram app has been extremely helpful in teaching and learning the vocabulary, grammar, and the four main language skills of the English language. For instance, a recent study by Abu-Ayfah (2020) explored Saudi college students' opinions of the Telegram app's suitability for English language instruction. A questionnaire was distributed to 300 college students as part of the study's quantitative data collection methodology. According to most college students' perceptions of the Telegram app, it has proven to be a useful tool for EFL learners (Abu-Ayfah, 2020). Bello and Hadiza (2017) claim that using the Telegram app as a teaching tool could give English teachers pertinent lesson plans and guidelines. The researchers suggested that in order to use the Telegram app effectively for teaching and learning, English teachers should make advance plans. Similarly, some other researchers expressed that the Telegram app is helpful for English language teaching and learning. (Heidari-Shahreza & Khodarahmi, 2018; Xodabande, 2017). In the words of Setiawan and Wahyuni (2017) and Xodabande (2017), using the Telegram app to learn English increases a variety of areas of EFL/ESL students' English language proficiency. Zamakhsari (2018) emphasized that students' perceptions of learning English were improved by using the Telegram app. Akobirov and Vokhidova (2018) claim that using the Telegram app in an ESL classroom has several advantages, and the results are quite positive and confirm that doing so can help students get better at reading comprehension. Additionally, Setiawan and Wahyuni (2017) discovered that using the Telegram app's recording feature enhanced students' speaking abilities in English. It was found, in accordance with Abbasi and Fatemeh (2018), that there was a significant difference between the experimental and control groups, demonstrating the superiority of teaching via Telegram over conventional classroom training. Members of the experimental group were given instructions via Telegram. The control group received instruction according to the institute's standard teaching procedures. A post-test was conducted with both participant groups to evaluate the students' development. An independent sample t-test revealed a significant difference between the scores of the experimental group and those of the control group when comparing the post-test scores of the two groups. According to a study by Widati and Heris (2023), 91 students preferred telegram as a learning tool. Additionally, Telegram was a successful instrument for media and learning assessment, including knowledge, attitude, and skill assessments. The ability for teachers to perform online and interactive assessments encourages learners to work on them, making knowledge assessment utilizing the Telegram Quiz Bot and Poll features beneficial. The results of Aladsani's qualitative research (2021) revealed a number of educational activities that might be used on Telegram to improve student interactions as well as how students communicate with one another and their teachers. Along with the benefits and drawbacks of utilizing Telegram in this course, the findings showed how the students perceived Telegram as a technology to improve their interactions in class. The results of this study may prompt policymakers and university professors to reevaluate their approaches to instruction and possibly promote the use of Telegram or other similar social media platforms to support students' learning. With the use of Telegram, Ghaemi and Golshan (2017) investigated how users of English as

a Foreign Language (EFL) use short messaging platforms to improve their vocabulary. According to Ghobadi and Taki (2018), Telegram is quickly rising to prominence as a social network tool for education and pleasure. One of the social networking programs has a lot of stickers with written English phrases and words. Users can even converse entirely using photographs and stickers rather than text. It is also utilized as a method to link classrooms with professionals and teachers who are interested in using social media in educational settings all over the world. Telegram aids in instructions and writing abilities, claim Naderi and Akrami (2018). It was also found by Heidar and Kaviani (2016) that Telegram offers EFL learners a unique opportunity to develop their vocabulary online. Because Telegram had a favorable impact on academic writing, Rahma et al. (2018) thought it could be a useful medium in the teaching-learning process. Helwa (2020) explored how well students' critical writing abilities were improved through the integration of Telegram into digital mind mapping. The results of her investigation revealed a statistically significant difference between the subjects' mean scores on the tests taken before and after the post-tests. These results were credited to a Telegram and digital mind mapping tool. In order to ascertain the students' perceptions of using Telegram as a tool for teaching language acquisition in writing skills, Zarei (2015) evaluated the effectiveness of using the program for teaching writing in a second language. The study group that utilized the Telegram app, according to the results, outperformed the control group. Iksan and Saufian (2017) delved into the application of Telegram in the process of teaching and learning. They learned that a number of strategies, including participation, technique, talks, images, and audio, can be used with Telegram. Students felt that using Telegram for teaching and learning allowed them to discover new things, be more innovative, come up with ideas on the spot, be real without worrying about looking foolish, and be enthused about their studies. By addressing the problems that instructors confront, using Telegram enhances education. In a study conducted by Wahyuni (2017) to evaluate the usefulness of Telegram in the learning and teaching process, the respondents expressed a strong desire to use Telegram in these contexts. Wong et al. (2022) conducted a study that clarified how mobile spelling checkers on Telegram should be used for academic writing. Numerous positive reviews are given to the mobile spell checker. The study comes to the conclusion that, in addition to the linguistic standards of core courses and the business world, the mobile spelling checker can satisfy the varied needs of pre-university students. According to Hussin (2016), the Telegram capabilities allowed for incoming and outgoing messages to show multiple times, alerting both students and teachers to be aware of. The researcher also discussed online learning in a distance learning setting, which was in agreement with Hussin (2016) and Alaa et al. (2019), who also promoted the idea that learning is not restricted to the classroom's four walls but can also take place elsewhere. Through Telegram, instructors may continue to involve students in the learning process. Telegram enables cross-border communication between educators and students. Teachers can respond to questions posted by students. The current study is intended to answer the following research questions:

Research Questions

- ❖ What do EFL students and teachers think about Telegram's usefulness in learning English as a foreign language?
- Are there any significant differences attributed to the study sample's participant role (student, teacher)?
- Which constraints do EFL learners experience when utilizing Telegram in learning English as a foreign language?

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Design

This research, using a descriptive-diagnostic research approach, applies a questionnaire and conducts semistructured interviews to collect the data. The research represents an attempt to achieve the following research objectives:

Participants

To accomplish these objectives of the current study, 40 EFL undergraduate students enrolled in the Department of English at the College of Languages and Translation, Najran University, Saudi Arabia, were chosen through a stratified sampling technique to gather data. The partitioning of a population into smaller subgroups known as strata is a key component of the sampling technique known as stratified random sampling a technique of sampling in which the population is divided into smaller groups known as strata. In stratified random sampling, also known as stratification, the strata are created based on the shared traits or features of the members, such as wealth or level of education (Hayes, 2021). The researchers were able to ensure homogeneity because every participant came from the English department, was enrolled in the same course, and was at the same level of education. All of the students range in age from 18-26. A population's sampling units' homogeneity is measured by how uniform they are. According to Stephen (2014), if all of the items in a data collection—such as individuals, cells, or characteristics—are comparable to one another, the data set is homogenous. All of the sample items in homogenous sampling are selected based on shared or identical characteristics. Individuals within a homogenous sample may exhibit similar characteristics such as age, geography, or occupation. The characteristics that have been chosen are beneficial to researchers.

Instruments

The study used two research instruments in a qualitative and quantitative manner: (i) To ascertain how the participants felt about the use of Telegram to enhance their English as a foreign language, a questionnaire was distributed to the participants of the study. (ii) Additionally, an interview with a semi-structured approach was conducted to investigate participants' viewpoints about the Telegram app and how effective the Englishlanguage learning of EFL learners was perceived by the teachers and to confirm the validity and dependability of using Telegram to develop EFL learners' academic performance.

Validity and Reliability

Face Validity: A panel of specialists (n = 3) reviewed the interview and appraisal questionnaire to determine their validity and content who have over 15 years of teaching experience. To ensure that the tools have sufficient information to handle the research problems, the researchers gave the experts access to research objectives and instruments. They examined how effective the tools are for teaching English as a foreign language using the Telegram app. The specialists noted a few modifications and suggested taking note of them. A few issues brought out by the experts were also resolved.

Internal Consistency: The exploratory sample of 15 questions was subjected to the study tool, and the Pearson correlation coefficient between the questions and the pertinent field was determined. The following table presents the results:

No. Item	Person Correlation	No. Item	Person Correlation	
1	.684**	9	. 305*	
2	.757**	10	. 524**	
3	. 727**	11	.501**	
4	.794**	12	.404**	
5	. 562**	13	.535**	
6	. 341*	14	.398**	
7	.386**	15	.582**	
8	.501**	Degree of freedom= N-2 DF= N-2 = 40=2 = 38 Critical value of 38 DF (.05) = 0.312		

Table 1: Pearson correlation coefficient (N=40)

To verify the authenticity, there are two methods. First, we have two options: the Pearson correlation score or the air count. The test is considered legitimate if the air count or Pearson correlation score is higher than >0.312. Given that the air count or Pearson correlation score is larger than >0.312 and falls between 305* and 794**, we can infer that the test is valid because it exceeds the minimum threshold. The significance value can be examined using a second method. The test is considered valid if the significance value is less than <0.05. The test is legitimate, and consistency has been confirmed, as indicated by the significant value of 0.000 to 0.05 computed in Table 1.

Reliability

When an instrument assesses experimental variables consistently for the same outcomes, it is considered reliable. According to Rosaroso (2015), a test must be reliable to show how consistently a particular set of test takers perform on the same test when it is given at various periods.

Solution of Cronbach's alpha:

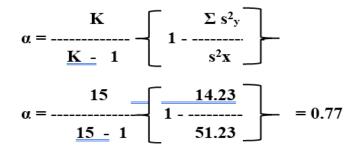


Table 2: Reliability Statistics - Cronbach's Alpha (N = 40)

Variables	Description	Values	Internal Consistency
K =	Number of test items	15	ACCEPTABLE
∑s2y =	A sum of the item variance	14.23	
s2 x =	The variance of the total score	51.23	Within the range of 0.70 to 0.79, our internal consistency is 0.77, which is considered acceptable.
α =	Cronbach's alpha	0.77	

This 15-question survey with a five-point Likert scale has passed the reliability test using Cronbach's alpha of internal consistency. According to Table 2, Cronbach's alpha stability coefficients, which are high stability coefficients i.e., 0.77 ranged between (0.70 - 0.79). Cronbach Alpha is used to determine whether a study tool is stable, and the Pearson correlation coefficient is used to determine consistency.

Data Collection

To gather the data for the study, the researchers formed a participant-only telegram group. After that, they created a Google Form questionnaire consisting of 15 numerically rated items to elicit students' and teachers' responses. A semi-structured interview was also used to get the teachers' perspectives on the constraints that students face while using Telegram. The best interview for obtaining information to address the research questions, as stated by Merriam (2009, p. 114), is semi-structured, which is "guided by a set of questions and issues to be explored, but neither the exact wording nor the order of questions is predetermined. A panel of experts who gave suggestions and criticism for improvement assessed the interview questions to evaluate their validity.

Data Analysis

Using SPSS program 25, the participant responses' quantitative data were analyzed to investigate their viewpoints and the effect of the Telegram app on how effective the English-language learning of EFL learners was perceived by them. In order to properly respond to the study's research objectives, a content analysis of the semi-structured interviews was employed to evaluate the usefulness of Telegram and the student's academic performance in EFL courses.

RESULTS

Q.1 What do EFL students and teachers think about Telegram's usefulness in learning English as a foreign language?

Domain-item	Mean	Standard deviation	Rank	Level
1	4.10	1.010	4	High
2	4.27	1.019	1	Very high
3	4.02	1.224	6	High
4	3.95	1.075	7	High
5	4.00	1.051	5	High
6	3.67	1.177	13	High
7	3.75	0.972	12	High
8	3.87	0.894	10	High
9	3.40	0.910	15	Medium
10	3.75	0.872	14	High
11	4.10	0.807	3	High
12	3.87	1.151	11	High
13	4.15	0.767	2	High
14	3.90	0.995	9	High
15	3.92	0.929	8	High
Total	3.91	0.132		High

Table 3. Descriptive statistics of the study samples' responses

Table 3 shows that the degree of the study sample's responses to the usefulness of Telegram in learning English as a foreign language for undergraduate EFL learners was high (M= 3.91, SD=0.132). This result means that both teachers and students think that Telegram can highly improve learning English as a foreign language. It was demonstrated that Telegram can help students complete their writing projects and assignments easily at a very high level in context item no.2. However, item no.9 which was least perceived by teachers and students who view Telegram makes it hard to learn writing lessons for learners at a medium level.

Q2. Are there any significant differences attributed to the study sample's participant role (student, teacher)?

Mean Variable Group df Sig. Student 3.698 0.171 -4.73 38 0.01 Participant role Teacher

Table 4. T-test for independent samples (participant role)

Table 4 shows there were significant differences between the study sample's responses due to their participant role (student, teacher). The results came in favor of teachers. The calculated t-value scored (-4.73) with a significance level (0.01).

Q.3. Which constraints do EFL learners experience when utilizing Telegram in learning English as a foreign language?

Content Analysis: The content analysis of the teachers' interviews about the constraints students experience when utilizing Telegram in learning English as a foreign language was qualitatively analyzed. The participants were of the view that numerous students are not aware of Telegram's potential for English language acquisition, and they encounter constraints like trouble using the platform, device compatibility, and problems as a result of excessive screen time. In addition, a few students complain about their lack of motivation, loneliness, and distraction. They also have problems dealing with issues like uploading and downloading files, which makes it challenging for them to get feedback from teachers and assistance with their academic work. Some of the excerpts of the interviews are presented here:

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- T2: A lot of students are unaware that Telegram may be used to study English. While they may be familiar with other online platforms like Blackboard and others, they have constraints when utilizing Telegram, such as difficulty in accessing, navigating, or engaging in online activities.
- T4: Some students face problems with their gadgets and devices such as smartphones, iPads, tablets, and personal computers, including software and other apps that are incompatible with their devices, as well as internet connections. This situation makes it difficult to learn English as a foreign language.
- T5: Due to extended screen time, some students studying English as a foreign language through Telegram have physical and health constraints like eye strain, headaches, tiredness, sitting in an uncomfortable posture, and other problems.
- T8. Certain students have unfavorable opinions about utilizing Telegram to learn English. They complain of feeling boredom, distraction, loneliness, or lack of motivation.
- T.10 Some students are unable to devote enough time to learning English through Telegram because of their hectic study schedules or other obligations, such as homework assignments issued by their lecturers or personal obligations.
- T13. A lot of students have trouble using Telegram to learn English since they don't receive the help they need from the technical staff. Additionally, they don't receive any technical training to help them deal with the difficulties they run into with Telegram's technical limitations.
- T-15. Students struggle to comprehend the material presented on Telegram. They have trouble downloading and uploading materials, which makes it difficult for them to get the academic help and/or feedback that teachers provide.

DISCUSSIONS

The outcome demonstrates that a large percentage of the study sample felt that Telegram was helpful for undergraduate EFL learners learning English as a foreign language. This indicates that teachers and students alike believe Telegram significantly enhances the process of learning English. It was also shown that Telegram can assist students in effortlessly finishing their assignments and writing projects at an extremely high level. Teachers and students, however, felt that Telegram hardly contributes to some English skills especially writing. These findings could be explained by the fact that, in the day we live in, it is nearly hard to imagine learning a subject without the use of digital and social media. The use of apps like Telegram in the classroom helps students who are learning English as a foreign language feel more at ease. According to the study conducted by Alahmad (2020) when teaching English to speakers of other languages, Telegram is a helpful resource, particularly when it comes to vocabulary development and language proficiency. It's crucial to remember that Telegram should only be used as an addition to traditional classroom instruction—not as a replacement for it.

Furthermore, the analysis showed that the study sample's participant role (teacher or student) had a substantial impact on the responses given. The findings were in favour of teachers. These findings may be attributed to the fact that teachers have greater exposure to technology than students do. In the classroom, teachers incorporate technology, especially social networking sites like Telegram. The current study aligns with the scholars (Bello & Hadiza, 2017; Widati & Heris, 2023; Iksan & Saufian, 2017).

Finally, the content analysis revealed that many students are unaware of Telegram's ability to help them learn the language, and they face difficulties like navigation, incompatibility, and issues caused by spending too much time using these apps. Some of the participants also expressed loneliness and distraction. Additionally, they struggle with downloading and uploading materials, which makes it difficult for them to receive feedback from teachers. These results can be explained by the fact that students are not as familiar with using apps such as Telegram to learn English as a foreign language. They are not driven to utilize technology or other social media apps for academic purposes; instead, they use them for personal and recreational purposes. The researchers were unable to discover a study that focused on Telegram's disadvantages mentioned above while teaching

English as a foreign language, which would have allowed them to support or reject the conclusions of the current investigation.

CONCLUSION

The study sample offered Telegram's ability to assist undergraduate EFL students in learning English as a foreign language positive feedback. In addition, there are notable differences in the participant roles (teacher, student) and responses. The results came in favour of teachers. In addition, the interviewees voiced that Telegram has issues with device compatibility and that many students are not aware of its potential for helping with English language learning including fear and hesitancy. This makes it challenging for students to receive teachers' feedback on their academic performance.

Implications

The results of this study suggest that Telegram is an essential tool for English as a foreign language learner. Teachers should use social media platforms such as Telegram in their lessons as facilitators to encourage students to learn with technology, digital tools, and online resources. The study's findings might make it easier for teachers and students to incorporate technology into teaching and learning environments.

Research Limitation

The limitations were that it only looked at two bachelor's degrees: the B.A. in Translation and the B.A. in English. Additional courses that require students to engage in both teaching and learning, such as the Master of Applied Linguistics or Master of TESOL, may be the subject of future research. To gain a complete understanding of the situation and how different aspects interact or cause problems for one another, researchers may take a step further and take into account the opinions and experiences of other academicians.

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