

## ENGLISH AS A FOREIGN LANGUAGE STUDENTS' OPINIONS ABOUT THE USE OF ENGLISH ON THE INTERNET

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### ABSTRACT

*As in many other fields, the Internet has been used for educational purposes, especially for foreign language learning. This study has the main objective to investigate English as a Foreign Language (EFL) students' opinions about the use of English on the Internet. By means of a Likert-type questionnaire dealing with the use of English on the Internet for various reasons (i.e., interest, benefit, socialization, entertainment), the views of 364 high school students at two high schools in a small city in Turkey were collected. Mean values and standard deviations were calculated in Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS-23) to reveal their reasons for using English on the Internet. Also, the question as to whether opinions about the use of English on the Internet significantly differ depending on the gender variable was explored by means of the independent samples t-test. The analysis of the data yielded the conclusion that participants mostly use English on the Internet for entertainment. It was also found that their level of interest in using English on the Internet was not very high. Additionally, it was discovered that girls mostly use English on the Internet for socialization while boys use it for entertainment. The implication of the study is that students' level of interest in using English on the Internet should be increased.*

*Keywords: English, Internet, Opinions, English as a Foreign Language.*

### INTRODUCTION

The effects of the Internet can be practically felt on every facet of our life. It is an undeniable fact that the Internet has made a great impact on advertising, marketing, and sales (Warschauer, Shetzer, & Meloni, 2000). Its influence on education is also very obvious. The Internet is now regarded as a powerful catalyst for the development of educational programs (Venezky, 2004). As Gibson and Oberg (2010) point out, the Internet is an innovation with great potential for the improvement of learning and teaching. Generally, it is used for a variety of educational purposes, such as excitement, preparation for the future, the design of interesting lessons, and access to students having attention problems and learning difficulties (Ertmer, Addison, Lane, Ross, & Woods, 1999).

English has essentially become the language of the Internet, and as indicated by Crystal (1997), approximately

85% of electronically stored information on the Internet is in English. Also, Neeley (2012) predicts that approximately 565 million people use English online. As Modiano (2005) points out, especially English learners' access to the Internet has considerably increased in recent years. Because English is now the dominant language on the Internet, the use of it in English Language Teaching (ELT) has also become widespread both in and out of the classroom as a way to improve learners' English language skills (Alsied & Pathan, 2013). According to Eastment (1999, p.1), the Internet is transforming "the way that the teaching and learning of English, and the business of ELT is conducted". Rather than thinking about whether to utilize the Internet in the foreign language classroom, teachers now seek creative ways to lead students to use this valuable tool to improve their language skills (Paulsen, 2001).

For foreign language education, the Internet can be

regarded as a dynamic medium giving teachers and students the opportunity to get immediate access to resources (Ryder & Graves, 1997). Through the Internet, foreign language learners can apply the information that they learn in the classroom, and thus practice their English by means of a contextualized environment without feeling the need to travel to an English-speaking country (Gonglewski, Meloni, & Brant, 2001). It is known that the aim of foreign language education is to offer students a learner-centered environment in which students can be exposed to the target language, and expand their communicative competence (Salaberry, 2001; Lee, 2005). Therefore, the Internet enables students to be involved in social communication, and to become exposed to meaningful input (Yang & Chen, 2007; Rashtchi & Hajihassani, 2010; LeLoup & Ponterio, 1997).

Improvement in basic language skills, increased motivation, more active processing, engagement in the learning process, higher-order thinking, and analytical abilities are only some of the other advantages of the use of the Internet in the learning and teaching process (Shetzer & Warschauer, 2000; Brownlee-Conyers, 1996; Stepp-Greany, 2002). Also, the Internet is considered to be an effective tool to increase students' productivity (İşman, Çağlar, Dabaj, Altınay, & Altınay, 2004). Particularly to young learners, technology offers various learning experiences, and has positive effects on their learning processes (İlter, 2015). In addition, the Internet leads to the achievement of social awareness (Dovedan, Seljan, & Vučković, 2002) and to a high level of motivation to learn about a second culture (Shetzer & Warschauer, 2000). Other merits of the Internet, especially in foreign language education are as follows: the availability of authentic materials, more genuine interaction, meaning making, global understanding and individualization (Sayers, 1993; Hampel & Baber, 2003).

## 1. Aim and Significance of the Study

The positive aspects of the Internet have encouraged many countries to incorporate technological equipment into the classroom (Brown & Warschauer, 2006). Educators, policymakers, and the general public in many countries acknowledge the importance of utilizing educational

technologies (Scheffler & Logan, 2000), and Turkey is one of these countries. Considering the advantages of the Internet not only in social life, but also in education, Turkey initiated the 4.5G technology in April, 2016. This technology made the speed of Internet access faster for mobile Internet users in the country. According to the statistics provided by Internet Live Stats (2016) about the number of Internet users in Turkey, there are currently over 46 million Internet users who constitute 58% of the whole population. From these statistics, it can be realized that the use of the Internet is extremely widespread in Turkey.

Also, as stated by Asan (2003), since 1982, Turkey has introduced a number of projects to popularize the use of information technologies in schools, and has acknowledged that using information technologies paves the way for effective learning. For instance, the project called "Movement of Enhancing Opportunities and Improving Technology" (2010) was developed by the National Ministry of Education in Turkey. The aim of the project is to develop the infrastructure of educational institutions so that students and teachers can use communication technologies effectively.

In addition to the important role of the Internet both in education and in social life in Turkey, the English language has come into prominence in Turkish society (Solak & Bayar, 2015; Arık & Arık, 2014; Doğançay-Aktuna & Kızıltepe, 2005) as the most commonly studied foreign language symbolizing modernization and elitism (Doğançay-Aktuna, 1998). Therefore, in line with the growing popularity of the Internet as well as the English language in Turkey, the current study aims to reveal high school students' opinions about the use of English on the Internet. Particularly, the researcher probed into their opinions about the benefits of using English on the Internet, its use for socialization and entertainment purposes as well as their level of interest in using English on the Internet. Additionally, whether their opinions differ depending on the gender variable was explored in this study. As Williams (2004) suggests, research on the role of the Internet in EFL education is still rudimentary, and thus there has emerged a need for more research studies. Moreover, revealing attitudes towards the Internet is considered to lead to more effective use of it for

educational purposes (Asan, 2003). Therefore, this study will address the following research questions:

1. What are EFL learners' opinions about the use of English on the Internet?
2. Do EFL learners' opinions about the use of English on the Internet differ depending on the gender variable?

## 2. Literature Review

There have been many studies focusing on the attitudes of EFL learners towards the Internet not only in Turkey, but also abroad. Related literature in Turkey indicates that EFL learners in the country (Aydın, 2007; Serin, 2012; Karakaş, 2011; Çakır & Solak, 2015) generally hold positive attitudes towards the Internet. Among these researchers, Aydın (2007) concluded his study by arguing that positive attitudes towards the Internet facilitate the foreign language learning process. Serin (2012) analyzed university students' perceptions about mobile learning technologies in terms of the major of study and gender. It was discovered that participants' perception levels do not differ significantly depending on the gender and departments. Similarly, Karakaş (2011), who collected data from 45 English teacher candidates, did not find any significant difference in participants' attitudes towards the use of computers in terms of the variables of gender and having a computer or not at home. Karakaş also revealed that the participants mainly use the computer for communication and learning purposes. In another study, Çakır and Solak (2015) came to the conclusion that anxiety about e-learning negatively affects learners' academic achievement while favorable attitudes positively influence their academic success.

In addition to these studies carried out in Turkey, there have been many research studies performed in other parts of the world, such as Malaysia (Hong, Ridzuan, & Kuek, 2003), Thailand (Srichanyachon, 2013), Bangladesh (Mahmud, 2011), Taiwan (Wu & Tsai, 2006), Ukraine (Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine, 2003), Iran (Sa'd, 2014), and Spain (Stepp-Greany, 2002). For instance, Hong, Ridzuan, and Kuek (2003) uncovered that Malaysian students hold favorable attitudes towards using the Internet as a means of learning, and no significant difference was found in their attitudes depending on the gender variable. They also revealed that learners having better basic

Internet competencies favor its use as a means of learning.

In Bangkok, Srichanyachon (2013) discovered that students learning English have favorable attitudes towards using the Internet as an English learning instrument. On the other hand, in Bangladesh, Mahmud (2011) uncovered positive perceptions about the Internet, and explained that it is regarded by the participants as the quickest way to access information. Mahmud also found that the perceptions about the internet do not differ based on the gender variable. According to another study carried out by Hussein (2010), even though some learners think that positive attitudes have positive influences on their language learning performances, some of them believe that the use of technology tools and self-directed learning opportunities are not sufficient in their classrooms.

On the other hand, in Taiwan, Tsai (2004) investigated high school students' perceptions about the internet and found that it is generally viewed as a technical product making our lives more advanced, as a functional instrument facilitating information and communication access, as a toy (e.g., online games) or as a form of navigation. The results also led to the conclusion that these perceptions affect how students view internet-based instruction. Likewise, Wu and Tsai (2006) showed that male learners have more positive attitudes than female students towards the Internet in Taiwan. Moreover, it was argued that students' grades cause significant differences in terms of attitudes towards the Internet. A similar study was carried out in Taiwan by Yang and Chen (2007) who showed that English learners acknowledge the Internet as a means of improving their foreign language skills.

In addition, the study conducted by the Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine (2003) dealt with the differences between teachers and students in terms of attitudes towards the Internet. While the majority of the students held positive attitudes towards the Internet, less than half of the teachers agreed that it is useful. In Iran, on the other hand, Sa'd (2014) arrived at the conclusion that traditional classes can be more motivating with the use of the Internet as it can facilitate access to a large number of examples which are not found in the EFL course books. In a study carried out with Hispanic university students, Slate,

Manuel, and Brinson (2002) reported that students' gender has a significant influence on their attitudes towards the Internet. In Spain, Stepp-Greany (2002) revealed that the Internet offers the following benefits to the students: increasing motivation, improving self-efficacy, enabling student-centered learning, higher-order thinking skills, and better memory.

### 3. Methodology

#### 3.1 Participants

Participants of this study are 364 9<sup>th</sup>, 10<sup>th</sup>, 11<sup>th</sup>, and 12<sup>th</sup> grade high school students attending two different high schools in a small city located in the Black Sea Region of Turkey. While 234 of these participants were female, the remaining 130 were male. The participants' age range was between 14 and 19. The schools were selected based on the convenience sampling which is generally applied to save time (Dörnyei, 2007). The reason these two schools were selected is because the researcher knows the English teachers who can help the researcher to collect data in a short time period.

#### 3.2 Data Collection Instrument

The data collection instrument used in this study was developed by Ocak and Hocoğlu (2014). Including 19 five-point Likert-type items in Turkish, the questionnaire has the following four sub-dimensions dealing with the reasons for using English on the internet: interest (e.g., 'I read English e-books on the Internet'), benefit (e.g., 'Knowing English enables me to learn about current events in the world on the Internet'), socialization (e.g., 'I am not afraid of speaking English to a native English speaker on the Internet'), and entertainment (e.g., 'I like listening to English songs on the Internet').

Items 1 to 8 are concerned with participants' interests in using English on the Internet, items 9 to 13 aim to reveal their opinions as to the benefits of using English on the Internet, items 14 to 16 are related to the use of English on the Internet for socialization, and items 17 to 19 for entertainment-related reasons. The reliability and validity of the questionnaire are based on the data collected by the originators of the questionnaire from 307 undergraduate students. The factor loads of the items in the questionnaire were between 0.49 and 0.83, and the Cronbach's alpha

coefficient was found to be 0.852 which confirms the reliability of the questionnaire. This value was found to be 0.839 in the present study. From Pallant's (2007) perspective, Cronbach's alpha coefficient for a questionnaire should be above 0.7. As the items in the questionnaire developed for university students were also valid for high school students, the researcher used the Turkish questionnaire without making any adaptations. The questionnaire items were translated for this publication.

### 4. Data Analysis

The data were analyzed through the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) 23. To find out the participants' attitudes towards using English on the Internet, mean values and standard deviations for each sub-dimension were calculated. For each item related to each sub-dimension, frequencies (f) and percentages (%) were also found. To find an answer to whether their attitudes differ depending on the gender variable, the independent samples t-test was applied.

### 5. Findings

Mean values and standard deviations are illustrated in Table 1 for each sub-dimension of the questionnaire. Then, frequencies and percentages of each item are presented.

As presented in Table 1, the means of scores obtained in each sub-dimension of the five-point Likert questionnaire are as follows: interest ( $\bar{x} = 3.64; \pm .92$ ), benefit ( $\bar{x} = 2.70; \pm 1.10$ ), socialization ( $\bar{x} = 2.63; \pm .83$ ), and entertainment ( $\bar{x} = 2.13; \pm 1.20$ ). As can be understood from the mean values for each sub-dimension, students mostly disagree (i.e., the mean values over 2.5 refer to 'disagree') with items pertaining to the interest in using English on the Internet. On the other hand, the disagreement level with the 'entertainment' sub-dimension is the lowest among all the

	Min-Max	$\bar{x}$	Std. Deviation
Entertainment	1 (Strongly agree) -5 (Strongly disagree)	2.1355	1.20272
Socialization	1 (Strongly agree) -5 (Strongly disagree)	2.6328	.83085
Benefit	1 (Strongly agree) -5 (Strongly disagree)	2.7038	1.10918
Interest	1 (Strongly agree) -5 (Strongly disagree)	3.6453	.92061

Table 1. Results of the Descriptive Statistics

sub-dimensions, which proves that most students agree on using English on the Internet for entertainment purposes.

As can be realized from Table 2, the majority of participants (73.3%) agree (i.e., 'agree' and 'strongly agree') that they like listening to English songs on the Internet. Watching English films, series or video, and reading the lyrics of English songs on the Internet were also the common reasons agreed by the participants related to the use of the Internet for entertainment.

Table 3 illustrates the findings about participants' use of English on the Internet for socialization purposes. For instance, the item 'I am not afraid of speaking English to native English speakers on the Internet' was agreed upon by a high number of participants (64.3%). Also, the item 'I have chatted with people in English on the Internet' was agreed upon by more than half of the participants (57.1%). These findings are rather promising in that most of the students reached a consensus on using English on the Internet for

	Strongly Disagree		Disagree		Partly Agree		Agree		Strongly Agree	
	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%
I like reading the lyrics of English songs on the Internet	40	11.0	36	9.9	51	14.0	83	22.8	154	42.3
I like listening to English songs on the Internet	35	9.6	25	6.9	37	10.2	71	19.5	196	53.8
I like watching English films, series or videos on the Internet	44	12.1	36	9.9	40	11.0	63	17.3	181	49.7

**Table 2. Students' Opinions on the Entertainment Sub-dimension**

	Strongly Disagree		Disagree		Partly Agree		Agree		Strongly Agree	
	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%
I am not afraid of speaking English to native English speakers on the Internet	34	9.3	30	8.2	66	18.1	119	32.7	115	31.6
I can speak English to foreigners on the Internet as my English is good	72	19.8	69	19	77	21.2	72	19.8	74	20.3
I have chatted with people in English on the Internet	73	20.1	52	14.3	31	8.5	75	20.6	133	36.5

**Table 3. Students' Opinions on the Socialization Sub-dimension**

socialization. However, 38.8% of the participants disagreed (i.e., 'disagree' and 'strongly disagree') with the item 'I can speak English to foreigners on the Internet as my English is good' while it was agreed upon by a similar number of students (40.1%).

As demonstrated in Table 4, the majority of participants (62.1%) agreed with the item 'Using English on the Internet enables communication with people regardless of their language and culture'. Moreover, most of the participants (57.7%) came to an agreement with the item indicating that using English on the Internet enables them to learn about current events in the world. On the other hand, nearly half of the students agreed that it is beneficial because Internet users can familiarize themselves with different cultures, people and lives (48.1%), and get access to the information on the Internet (47.8%).

As can be seen in Table 5, the level of disagreement is rather high in the interest sub-dimension of the questionnaire. It was discovered that the most commonly disagreed upon items expressing their level of interest in

	Strongly Disagree		Disagree		Partly Agree		Agree		Strongly Agree	
	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%
Using English on the Internet helps me familiarize myself with different cultures, people and lives	58	15.9	61	16.8	70	19.2	90	24.7	85	23.4
Using English on the Internet increases my self-confidence	73	20.1	84	23.1	85	23.4	83	22.8	39	10.7
Knowing English enables me to learn about current events in the world on the Internet	45	12.4	41	11.3	68	18.7	103	28.3	107	29.4
Using English on the Internet enables communication with people regardless of their language and culture	44	12.1	37	10.2	57	15.7	115	31.6	111	30.5
Knowing English enables easy access to the information on the Internet	43	11.8	57	15.7	90	24.7	78	21.4	96	26.4

**Table 4. Students' Opinions on the Benefit Sub-dimension**



	Strongly Disagree		Disagree		Partly Agree		Agree		Strongly Agree	
	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%
I follow news pages in English	101	27.7	120	33.0	71	19.5	47	12.9	25	6.9
I read English e-books on the Internet	121	33.2	163	44.8	41	11.3	22	6.0	17	4.7
I like reading English news papers on the Internet	130	35.7	157	43.1	49	13.5	15	4.1	13	3.6
I use search engines on the Internet in English	115	31.6	119	32.7	66	18.1	30	8.2	34	9.3
I reach useful daily life information by using the Internet in English	103	28.3	115	31.6	77	21.2	33	9.1	36	9.9
I use social networking sites in English	112	30.8	117	32.1	58	15.9	33	9.1	44	12.1
I like sharing English messages on social networking sites	93	25.5	96	26.4	72	19.8	53	14.6	50	13.7
I like listening to English radio on the Internet	102	28.0	85	23.4	59	16.2	60	16.5	58	15.9

**Table 5. Students' Opinions on the Interest Sub-dimension**

using English on the Internet are as follows: reading English newspapers on the Internet (78.8%), reading English e-books (78%), and using search engines on the Internet in English (64.3%). On the other hand, the level of disagreement decreases for the following items: listening to English radio on the Internet (51.4%) and sharing English messages on social networking sites (51.9%). As can be understood from the findings regarding their level of interest, participants do not have high levels of interest in the use of English on the Internet.

To answer the second research question dealing with whether participants' opinions about the use of English on the Internet differ significantly depending on the gender variable, the independent samples t-test was applied. The results are illustrated in Table 6.

As a result of the independent samples t-tests presented in Table 6, it was found that female and male students' attitudes were significantly different in the sub-dimensions of socialization ( $t(362)=1.92, p<.05$ ) and entertainment

Score	Groups	N	$\bar{X}$	SD	t	df	P
Interest	Female	234	3.6330	.84558	-.34	362	.73
	Male	130	3.6673	1.04531			
Benefit	Female	234	2.6444	1.04741	-1.37	362	.17
	Male	130	2.8108	1.20935			
Socialization	Female	234	2.6952	.79288	1.92	362	.05*
	Male	130	2.5205	.88728			
Entertainment	Female	234	1.9900	1.15073	-3.13	362	.00*
	Male	130	2.3974	1.25349			

\* Significant at  $P<.05$

**Table 6. Results of the Independent Samples T-test**

( $t(362) = -3.13, p<.05$ ). On the other hand, no significant differences were revealed between female and male participants' scores in the interest and benefit sub-dimensions.

It was also uncovered that female students' socialization scores ( $\bar{x} = 2.69; SD=.79$ ) were significantly higher than those of their male counterparts. On the contrary, male participants' scores in the entertainment sub-dimension ( $\bar{x} = 2.39; SD=1.25$ ) were significantly higher than those of the female participants. These findings show that girls mostly use English on the Internet for socialization while boys do it for entertainment.

## 6. Discussion

This study delved into high school EFL students' opinions about the use of English on the Internet, and thus the first research question was 'What are EFL learners' opinions about the use of English on the Internet?' One of the major findings of the study is that the most common purpose of using English on the Internet is entertainment. For instance, the majority of participants indicated that they like listening to English songs on the Internet. On the other hand, students' level of interest in using English on the Internet was the lowest among all the sub-dimensions of the questionnaire, and activities such as reading English newspapers on the Internet, reading English e-books, and using search engines on the Internet in English were not preferred by most of the participants. These findings are similar to the results of Ocak and Hocaoglu's (2014) study indicating that students generally disagreed with the items in the interest sub-dimension of the questionnaire (e.g., 'I use social networking sites in English'). In line with the findings

of the present study, they also revealed that most of the students in their study use English on the Internet for entertainment purposes (e.g., listening to songs).

The use of English on the Internet for entertainment is considered to be beneficial for the foreign language development. To illustrate, Sundqvist (2009) discovered that students who played video games or surfed the Internet in English had a larger vocabulary and higher oral proficiency levels. Furthermore, Sundqvist and Wikström (2015) found that students playing digital games for more than five hours weekly obtained higher grades in English. Likewise, Uuskoski (2011) investigated the influence of gaming habits on English grades, and concluded that students who played video games regularly had significantly higher English grades than those who played less. In addition to games, it was uncovered that listening to English songs in web-based learning environments and trying to understand the lyrics positively affect students' language learning endeavors (Beasley & Chuang, 2008). Another use of English on the Internet for entertainment purposes is to watch videos online. Reviewing relevant literature, Berk (2009) arrived at the conclusion that the visual and verbal components of video clips appeal to the students and contribute significantly to their foreign language development.

However, using English mainly for entertainment is not sufficient for language development. As this study shows, students' level of interest in English activities on the Internet is low, and thus it should be increased. Students' attitudes towards using English on the Internet to read English e-books or newspapers, using search engines or social media networks in English should be more positive if they would like to get maximum benefit in the process of learning English. It is argued that students' positive attitudes towards the Internet not only enable teachers to effectively use the Internet as a supplementary teaching tool (Heirati & Alashti, 2015), but also facilitate students' foreign language learning process (Aydın, 2007; Çakır & Solak, 2015). Therefore, teachers should raise English learners' awareness about the importance of using English while using social networking sites and search engines. When students are aware of the usefulness of using English on the Internet as a means of improving their language skills, internet-based

exercises and activities can be successfully incorporated into the EFL classrooms.

Now that many EFL teachers tend to use the Internet to create a meaningful learning environment (Koehler, Mishra, Hershey, & Peruski, 2004), they should first familiarize students with the idea that the Internet can be a great tool to help them become engaged in social communication and comprehensible input by means of collaboration with friends in a self-directed manner (Yang & Chen, 2007; Rashtchi & Hajihassani, 2010; LeLoup & Ponterio, 1997; Nah, 2008). To raise students' awareness about the importance of being interested in using English on the Internet for language learning, teachers themselves should first have the required knowledge and motivation about the use of the Internet in the classroom (Shetzer & Warschauer, 2000). Therefore, by means of pre-service and in-service training programs, their motivation should be ensured. Also, for English teachers to be able to successfully guide students in using English to improve their language skills, each teacher should make decisions depending on the goals of the program, the local needs of the students, and the available technology as well as the materials (Warshauer & Whittaker, 1997).

As for the socialization sub-dimension, this study revealed some promising findings. For instance, the items 'I have chatted with people in English on the Internet' and 'I am not afraid of speaking English to native English speakers on the Internet' were mostly agreed upon by the participants. These findings mean that the Internet is generally used as a means of socialization. In Kumar and Kaur's (2005) study, it was also pointed out that half of the participants in their study use the Internet for communication purposes. In the same vein, according to Young (2003), one of the advantages of using the Internet in English is finding friends in other countries to socialize and practice English with.

Other positive findings were discovered in terms of the benefit sub-dimension. The use of English on the Internet was found to be beneficial by many students in this study because it is believed to encourage communication with people from different linguistic and cultural backgrounds, to enable them to learn about current events in the world, to familiarize themselves with different cultures, people and

lives, and to facilitate access to the information on the Internet. The findings related to the benefit sub-dimension are similar to the results of previous studies indicating that the Internet leads to social awareness (Dovedan, Seljan, & Vučković, 2002), motivation to learn a second culture (Shetzer & Warschauer, 2000), interaction and global understanding (Sayers, 1993; Hampel & Baber, 2003).

Another aim of this study was to explore whether participants' opinions about the use of English on the Internet differ depending on the gender variable, and thus the second research question was 'Do EFL learners' opinions about the use of English on the Internet differ depending on the gender variable?' Contrary to findings both in the EFL context of Turkey (Serin, 2012; Karakaş, 2011) and abroad (Mahmud, 2011; Jafar, 2008; Tsai, 2004), significant differences were found in the entertainment and socialization sub-dimensions. Supportive evidence can also be found in the literature about the gender differences in terms of internet-related activities and attitudes (Hargittai & Shafer, 2006; Dufour, et al., 2016; Slate, Manuel, & Brinson, 2002; Whitley, 1997). It was revealed in this study that boys' use of English on the Internet for entertainment purposes is significantly higher than that of the girls. This finding corroborates that of Sundqvist and Sylvén (2014) who also revealed that the boys in their study used the Internet to play digital games more frequently than girls. On the other hand, this study showed that girls' use of English on the Internet for socialization purposes is significantly higher than that of boys. A similar result in line with this finding is that the majority of female students use social networks while most of the boys spend time in multiplayer online role-playing games (Dufour, et al., 2016).

It is known that English teachers have the tendency to use the Internet effectively to immerse students in an interactive and meaningful learning context (Koehler, et al., 2004). Therefore, considering the results of this study pertaining to the effects of gender on internet use in English, English teachers can lead female EFL students to Internet-based activities, such as chatting in English, and encourage male learners to play English online games to improve their English.

## Conclusion

In brief, this study showed that, although the Internet is generally used in English for fun, there is a low level of interest in using English on the Internet for activities, such as reading newspapers, e-books, or using search engines. It is thus suggested that even if using English on the Internet for entertainment purposes could provide some advantages for EFL learners, their interest levels should be increased. Richards (2015) draws attention to some of the Internet activities that can be used to create a positive attitude towards the use of English on the Internet: chat rooms, e-mediated tandem learning, listening logs, digital media, and digital games. On the other hand, Zhong (2008) lists the following Internet tools that can be utilized to encourage students to improve their English skills: instant messaging, discussion boards, interactive blogs, online forums, Social networks (e.g., Facebook, Second Life), and voice-chat programs (e.g., Skype, iChat).

Finally, it can be recommended that for successful implementation of the Internet in improving students' foreign language skills, teachers should collect data from their own students and try to understand what kind of Internet environments appeal to them more. Also, country-wide national research studies can be carried out to be able to incorporate suitable Internet-based learning opportunities into the national EFL syllabuses so that English learners' skills could be improved both inside and outside the classroom.

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