

# **LANGUAGE IN INDIA**

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## **Internet Usage and Its Effect on Reading Skill Among the College Students**

**A Case Study of Coimbatore Region**

**S. Anand Lenin Vethanayagam, M.A., M.Ed., Ph.D.**

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### **INTRODUCTION**

The technology which finds place everywhere comforts the users in many a way and inconvenience in certain ways as well. However, using technology for performing cooking, or entertainment or education or any type of social activity have become things of the current age. The scientific advancement in the field of communication is beyond compare and still more wonders are to be expected to occur in the years to come

So, the Internet can play multiple roles in language communication. It originated on the mainframe as a tutor that delivers language skill practice. With the advent of multimedia technology on the personal computer, and with the development of computer networks, it now serves as a medium of local and global communication and a source of authentic materials. This multiplicity of roles has made the computer an electronic workbook and the varieties of software open new avenues to better their peoples' language use. The betterment in their language depends on a number of factors, including the nature of interaction via computer, the socio-cultural contexts that shape that interaction and the way that students communicate and use the multimedia modes.

The college students with their English language interact globally through Internet. This phenomenon paves way for improvising the language skills of students significantly. Technologically there has been some development of computer networking; which allows the computer to be used as a vehicle for interactive human communication.

### **COMPUTER TECHNOLOGY IN COMMUNICATION**

Computer networking allows a powerful extension of the computer as-tool in that it now facilitates access to other people as well as to information and data computer networking. In the education setup provides two important technological and social developments.

- 1) Computer mediated Communication (CMC)
- 2) Globally Linked Hypertext

Computer mediated communication allows the users in either asynchronous (not simultaneous) or synchronous (simultaneous, in real time) mode. The tools such as e-mail allows participants to compose message whenever they choose or Internet Relay chat which allows individuals all around the world to have a simultaneous conversation by

typing at their key boards. CMC permits not only one-to-one communication but also one-to-many communication. Participants share not only brief messages but also lengthy documents facilitating collaborative reading and writing.

Globally linked hypertext and hypermedia, as represented in the World Wide Web, represents a revolutionary new medium for organizing, linking and accessing information. Its important features are 1) Informational representation through multipliers strands linked electronically, 2) Integration of graphics, audio, and audiovisual information together with texts. 3) Rapid global access and 4) Ease and low cost of international publication. The worldwide web offers an abundance of information resources whose utility is just beginning to be tapped. Using the World Wide Web, students can search through millions of fields around the world within minutes locate and access authentic materials. These features can facilitate an approach to use technology in which authentic and creative communication is integrated. Further more, the World Wide Web has tremendous potential for creating and providing access to multiuser, interactive multimedia environments.

Despite today's computer programs not yet intelligent enough to be truly interactive, there are apparent advantages. Computer programs that are capable of evaluating the appropriateness of a user's writing or speech, and intelligently choosing among a range of communicative response options are not expected to exist for quite some time. Although intelligent computer assisted communication may be the next and ultimate usage of computer, it still remains a distant dream.

So the computer can play multiple roles in language communication. It originated on the mainframe as a tutor that delivers language skill practice. With the advent of multimedia technology on the personal computer, and with the development of computer networks, it now serves as a medium of local and global communication and a source of authentic materials. This multiplicity of roles has made the computer an electronic workbook and the varieties of software open new avenues to better their peoples' language use. The betterment in their language depends on a number of factors, including the nature of interaction via computer, the socio-cultural contexts that shape that interaction and the way that students communicate and use the multimedia modes.

## **LANGUAGE**

Every developed language possesses four important skills viz, listening, speaking, reading and writing (LSRW) as tools of communication.

Listening is a passive and receptive skill. It includes perception and decoding of the audible signals, which come to the ear. Listening skill is applied for capturing the meaning from the speech. It is the first and foremost skill acquired by every normal human being.

Speaking skill is an active and productive oral skill. It is an effective mode of communication that includes production and encoding of audio signals. It plays a very

major role in the day-to –day language activities.

Reading skill is a literacy skill, it is a passive and receptive skill and it helps to acquire knowledge and experience transmitted through writing. In Social context, reading is considered as a highly elegant skill. In most of the communicative activities, the role of reading is inevitable.

Writing is also a literacy skill. It is active and productive skill. Historically this skill is acquired at a later phase of language development and of language learning. In pedagogy writing an advanced level of language skill, is considered as an important skill for teaching /testing procedure.

The language skills are otherwise recognized as passive and active skills. The productive skills viz., speaking and writing are now-a-days denominated as active skills since the language users while involving in the act of writing or speaking, are so active. That is, the act of speaking or writing is explicitly seen by other and for excreting these acts, either as a speaker or writer, one has to physically do certain overt behavior, and for the act of listening, or reading, one need not take special effort overtly. Therefore, the skills of listening and reading are known as passive skills.

## **ROLE OF ENGLISH IN MODERN WORLD**

English, in modern days has not only been functioning as a lingua franca but also as a panacea for communication barriers being arisen because of the linguistic diversities on the road of world wide information transmission transmitted either through conventional or modern technological media. If one misses the bus in learning English; in the modern social behavior he cannot make head or tail out of the English utterances or sentences. The knowledge of English in globalized village is a prerequisite for every individual to perform many a social activity and for social maintenance especially for one's private and professional life.

## **LANGUAGE SKILL VERSES INTERNET**

If one takes an inclusive view if all language activities, like the number of abilities or skill is fairly large example appreciation of literature, recitation, commercial correspondence, and translation. However for the lower levels the abilities revolve themselves into the following general skills.

The understanding of oral languages:

1. The speaking of language
2. The reading of language
3. The writing of language

From one perspective, there is an affinity between 1&2 and between 3&4 since the former involve audible and the later graphic signs. However, according to the nature of

activities the preferable grouping is 1 and 3 and 2 and 4. This may be brought out more clearly if we present four abilities in the form and order.

1. Understanding what is heard.
2. Understanding what is read
3. Expressing ideas in speech
4. Expressing ideas in writing

When we speak or write we are engaged in producing or reproducing language. On the other hand, when we listen to others speaking or when read our role is receptive.

The term usually applies to mark the distinction between the two sets of functions, active and passive. These terms are open to objection as they mean simply that listening and readings are not activities. It is only when we note the vast distinction between reception and production of language that by contrast that one appears to be an active process and the other almost passive. The terms are retained here for convenience owing to these having gained currency as both objectives and norms

## **STUDY AREA**

Coimbatore (population-1.25 million) is the second biggest city of the southern state of Tamilnadu, India and is identified as one of the fast developing metros of India. There are about 50,000 small, medium and large-scale industries. It has 5 universities, 25 Engineering Institutions & more than 100 arts & science colleges.

Coimbatore city is strategically located at the junction of the three modern southern states Tamilnadu, Kerala and Karnataka with proximity to many important cities of Southern India. It is well connected by air and surface transport. This friendly city has a salubrious climate and surrounded by major tourist spots, has always been a natural favorite with international tourists. The scenic hill stations of Ooty, Munnar and Kodaikannal, the historic temples of Perur, Palani, the historic city of Madurai, Guruvayur, the nearby exciting Kerala with its enchanting back-waters and ayurvedic health resorts to name a few are all a couple of hours drive.

Coimbatore has been a major center for higher education from the early 18<sup>th</sup> century. Coimbatore has an Agricultural University, several Government and private engineering colleges, two medical colleges and a number of science and arts colleges, which offer Bachelor Degree, Master Degree and Doctorate Degree. The most famous are the Bharathiar University, Coimbatore Institute of Technology, Kumara guru College of Technology and PSG College of technology whose annual Design Data Book is said to be the engineering industry's bible. There are a number of reputed and well-equipped education institutions in Coimbatore, which are of high standard compared to any other institute in the whole of Tamilnadu. The colleges have a large number of academic programs to choose from. Coimbatore Institutes specializes in high quality teaching with emphasis on fundamentals and innovative concepts. All the Collages are well staffed and well equipped to meet the needs of latest technological trends and International standards.

Coimbatore was the only city with a wide variety of courses and higher education facility in southern districts of Tamilnadu.

## SELECTION OF SAMPLES

For the present study approximately 200 samples have been selected. The students studying in their under graduate courses especially in their first year of their courses have alone been selected. Moreover, all the sample students represent three important types of colleges viz, 1) Government college 2) Aided college and 3) Self finance college which are located in the Coimbatore city. The samples have been selected by simple random sampling method.

In the first stage, all the colleges located in Coimbatore city have been divided into three categories viz, Government colleges, Aided colleges and self finance colleges. Then a co-education college from each category has been identified. Eventually, the government Arts College for Government College, Kongunadu Arts and Science college for Aided college and Hindustan college of Arts and Science for Self-finance college have been selected for data elicitation.

The rationale behind the selection of these colleges is that all these three colleges run courses in the disciplines like science, life science and commerce. In all these colleges, in total approximately 400 students are studying in the first year of the above-mentioned courses. Of them about 50% of students have been chosen for the present study. The students have been selected following the roll number. From the 400 students 200 students following the alternative roll numbers have been selected as respondents and data has been collected from them for the present study.

The basic reason why the freshmen of the undergraduate course have been chosen for the present study is that they are very active in using the modern communication technology compared with the sophomore. Moreover, they are very regular to the college and very co-operative. These students have been chosen with an aim to understand how far these young students use the new medium of communication.

## VARIABLES OF THE STUDY

The present study considers three types of variables, they are:

**Independent variables:** Internet usage and its aspects like frequency of internet usage, internet usage at home, internet usage at college, internet usage at commercial browsing center, internet usage for e-mail, internet usage for chatting, internet usage for entertainment and internet usage for downloading study materials etc.

**Dependent variables:** Reading skill.

**Intervening variables:** Sex, Nature of the colleges, Course of study, family income, fathers' occupation, mothers' occupation, fathers' education and mothers' education

## DATA COLLECTION

Considering the major objectives and hypothesis envisaged in the present study relevant data were collected from 200 respondents selected out of 400 students studying in the I year of three disciplines of the selected colleges in Coimbatore.

Name of the college	No. of student Enrolled			Sampled student from each subject			Total No. of sample
	Sci.	Life sci.	Comr.	Sci.	Life sci.	Comr.	
Kongunadu college of Arts & Science. Coimbatore -29	40	40	60	16	16	18	50
Government Arts college. Coimbatore -18	40	30	50	16	16	17	49
Hindusthan College of Arts & Science. Coimbatore -28	40	40	60	17	15	19	51
Total	120	110	170	49	47	54	150

## STATISTICAL TECHNIQUES USED

The data obtained through serious field survey by administering various tools have been classified processed and analyzed applying modern principles or approaches of Educational Technology. The data have been analyzed both qualitatively and quantitatively by applying advanced statistics. The statistical tools applied for analysis are as follows.

- The factor analysis
- The F- test

Analysis of variance (ANOVA) has been applied in this study in order to understand the fact whether there exists any significant difference among the receptive skills of the students with respect to internet usage, internet behavior, parents occupation and educational status, family income, computer anxiety and course they have chosen etc.

## RESULTS AND INTERPRETATION

**TABLE: 1 Mean score difference in reading skill between the groups based on frequency (daily/ time permits/ rarely) of internet usage among the selected college students**

	Groups	Sum of Squares	Mean of Squares	DF	F-Value	Level of Significance
<b>Reading</b>	Between Groups	658.341	329.171	2	22.361	<b>Significant at 0.05 level</b>
	Within Groups	2178.652	14.721	148		

The table no. 1 exhibits the mean score difference in reading skill between the group based on frequencies of internet usage among the selected college students. The difference in mean score between the group (F-value 22.361) is statistically significant at 0.05 level. It can be concluded that frequency of internet usage influences the reading skill of the selected college students.

**TABLE: 2 Mean score difference in reading skill between the groups based on Internet usage at commercial browsing center among the selected college students.**

	Groups	Sum of Squares	Mean of Squares	DF	F-Value	Level of Significance
<b>Reading</b>	Between Groups	58.502	58.502	1	3.137	<b>Not Significant at 0.05 level</b>
	Within Groups	2778.491	18.648	149		

The table no.2 exhibits the mean score difference in reading skill between the groups based on Internet usage at commercial browsing center among the selected college students. The difference in mean score between the groups (F-value 3.137) is statistically not significant at 0.05 levels. Hence the hypothesis is rejected. It can be concluded that Internet usage at commercial browsing center does not influence the reading skill of the selected college students.

**TABLE: 3 Mean score difference in reading skill between the groups based on internet usage at college among the selected college students.**

	Groups	Sum of Squares	Mean of Squares	DF	F-Value	Level of Significance
<b>Reading</b>	Between Groups	12.467	12.467	1	0.658	<b>Not Significant at 0.05 level</b>
	Within Groups	2824.526	18.957	149		

More over the table no. 3 exhibits the mean score difference in reading skill between the groups based on Internet usage at college among the selected college students. The difference in mean score between the groups (F-value 0.658) is statistically not



significant at 0.05 levels. It can be concluded that Internet usage at college does not influence the reading skills of the selected college students.

**TABLE:4 Mean score difference in reading skill between the groups based on Internet usage at home among the selected college students.**

	Groups	Sum of Squares	Mean of Squares	DF	F-Value	Level of Significance
<b>Reading</b>	Between Groups	147.757	147.7575	1	8.187	<b>Significant at 0.05 level</b>
	Within Groups	2689.236	18.049	149		

The table no. 4 exhibits the mean score difference in reading skill between the group based on Internet usage at home among the selected college students. The difference in mean score between the groups (F-value 8.178) is statistically significant at 0.05 levels. It can be concluded that Internet usage at home influences the reading skill of the selected college students

**TABLE: 5 Mean score difference in reading skill between the groups based on Internet usage for e-mail among the selected college students.**

	Groups	Sum of Squares	Mean of Squares	DF	F-Value	Level of Significance
<b>Reading</b>	Between Groups	130.178	130.178	1	7.166	<b>Significant at 0.05 level</b>
	Within Groups	2706.816	18.167	149		

More over the table no. 5 exhibits the mean score difference in reading skill between the groups based on the Internet usage of e-mail among the selected college students. The difference in mean score between the groups (F-value 7.166) is statistically significant at 0.05 levels. It can be concluded that Internet usage for e-mail influence the reading skill of the selected college students.

**TABLE: 6 Mean score difference in reading skill between the groups based on usage of Internet for chatting among the selected college students.**

	Groups	Sum of Squares	Mean of Squares	DF	F-Value	Level of Significance
<b>Reading</b>	Between Groups	27.974	27.974	1	1.484	<b>Not Significant at 0.05 level</b>
	Within Groups	2809.019	18.852	149		

More over the above table no. 6 exhibits the mean score difference in reading skill between the groups based on usage of Internet for chatting among the selected college students. The difference in mean score between the groups (F-value 1.484) is statistically not significant at 0.05 levels. Hence the hypothesis is rejected. It can be concluded that usage of Internet for chatting does not influence the reading skill of the selected college students.

**TABLE: 7 Mean score difference in receptive skills between the groups based on Internet usage for entertainment among the selected college students.**

	Groups	Sum of Squares	Mean of Squares	DF	F-Value	Level of Significance
<b>Reading</b>	Between Groups	7.915	7.915	1	0.417	<b>Not Significant at 0.05 level</b>
	Within Groups	2823.079	18.987	149		

The table no.7 exhibits the mean score difference in reading skill between the groups based on Internet usage for entertainment among the selected college students. The difference in mean score between the groups (F-value 0.417) is statistically not significant at 0.05 levels. It can be concluded that Internet usage for entertainment does not influence the reading skill of the selected college students.

**TABLE: 8 Mean score difference in reading skill between the groups based on Internet usage for download the study materials among the selected college students.**

	Groups	Sum of Squares	Mean of Squares	DF	F-Value	Level of Significance
<b>Reading</b>	Between Groups	48.057	48.057	1	2.567	<b>Not Significant at 0.05 level</b>
	Within Groups	2788.936	18.718	149		

More over the above table no. 8 exhibits the mean score difference in reading skill between the groups based on Internet usage to download the study materials among the selected college students... The difference in mean score between the groups (F-value 2.567) is statistically not significant at 0.05 levels. It can be concluded that Internet usage for download the study materials does not influence the reading skill of the selected college students.

**TABLE: 9 Mean score difference in reading skill between the groups based on Internet usage among the selected college students.**

	Groups	Sum of	Mean	DF	F-Value	Level of
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		Squares	of Squares			Significance
<b>Reading</b>	Between Groups	374.559	187.279	2	11.256	<b>Significant at 0.05 level</b>
	Within Groups	2462.435	16.638	148		

The above table no. 9 exhibits the mean score difference in reading skill between the groups based on Internet usage among the selected college students. The difference in mean score between the groups (F-value 11.256) is statistically significant at 0.05 levels. It can be concluded that Internet usage influence the reading skill of the selected college students.

## **FINDINGS AND CONCLUSION**

The above table gives the following interpretations.

The Internet usage and frequency of Internet usage influence the reading skill of the students. That is to say that if a student frequently uses the internet will in turn help him to develop his receptive skills, viz, reading skill.

The places of Internet usage especially the commercial browsing centre and home, also significantly influence over the reading skill of the students.

Among the purposes of the Internet usage, the purpose of e-mail, influences the reading skill of the students.

Contrary to these the Internet usage, viz., college and the other purposes of internet usage viz, chatting, entertainment and downloading the study material have no significant influence over the reading skill of the respondents.

Further more, when a student uses the centre, he has to pay for it, so, he pays utmost heed on the Internet usage. Therefore there is a possibility to get developed in the receptive skills also. Similarly, the students who own Internet facilities in their home environment itself, there are bright changes to avail this facility quite frequently and they can also understand the cost-benefit effect of their efforts. So there must be some development in their reading skill and while using the Internet, especially for sending e-mail to their friends or others, they have to all the way use their linguistic knowledge for writing a mail. This activity would certainly help the students to hone their reading skill. Therefore the present study says that frequency of Internet usage, the places of Internet usage, viz., commercial browsing centre and home and purpose of Internet usage i.e., for e-mail, have significant relationship with the development of reading skill.

But the place of internet usage especially ‘the college’ has no significant relationships with the development of reading skill as the students are uninterestingly, but because of the compulsion of the situation and teachers, sitting in front of the internet, they do not

show much involvement in internet usage. This will not, in a way, help their development of reading skill.

Similarly, the purposes of internet usages viz., chatting, entertainment and downloading the study materials, have no significant relationship with the development of reading skill of the respondents. As far as chatting is concerned no one cares the aspect of language skills while chatting, all the people who chat through internet pay their attention only on the information because of the time constrain, people with very minimum linguistic clues can easily understand the information and more number of abbreviations and acronyms are used in chatting. Therefore there is no significant development in their reading skill. This may be the reason why the variable 'Chatting' has no significant influence on their receptive skills. Moreover while engaged in entertainment in Internet, the students pay their attention, only in entertainment and similarly while they use Internet for downloading the study materials their role is very passive. Therefore, all these variables have no significant relationship with the development of reading skill.

INTERNET USAGE	READING SKILL
USAGE -Frequency PLACES - Home PURPOSES - e-mail INTERNET USAGE VS READING SKILL	Significant
PLACES - College - Browsing centre PURPOSES - Chatting - Entertainment - Downloading study materials	Not Significant

Certain variables of Internet usage have significant relationship with reading skill. They are frequency of Internet usage places via, Browsing Centre and home and purpose of e-mail. But other places like College and other purposes namely chatting, entertainment and Downloading have no significant relationship with reading skill.

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