Technology in Learning by EFL Omani students in ELT Classrooms:

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ABSTRACT:
English Language Teaching (ELT) is an area that has changed over the years, moving from very teacher centered approaches to learner-centered ones (Richards, 1985). English language learners through technology explore the use of computers and technology as pedagogical tools to aid in the appropriate instruction of English language learners (ELLs) across all content areas. However, the adoption of technology by EFL Arabic-speaking students in Oman is better examined in the light of the fact that these students depend on online and offline technological tools and applications like electronic/online dictionaries, translators and software applications to write their assignments, projects and reports in English. This paper investigates the usage and dependence on technology with its offline and online applications by English as a Foreign Language (EFL) Arabic speaking level-1 and level-2 undergraduate students in Oman and the implications of that on the accuracy, efficiency and speed.

Keywords: Assignments, English Language, ELT classrooms, Education, EFL Arabic-speaking Students, Teachers, Technology.

INTRODUCTION:
Technology is a very broad term, which includes electronic gadgets, hardware, software applications, etc. In the field of education there are many technological tools and applications which are used these days by students. These tools can be categorized into two broad areas, Offline and Online tools. The Online tools are websites or portals, such as online dictionaries, translation websites and applications which are available on the internet to facilitate the user to find the meaning of difficult vocabulary, translating the content from one natural language (such as Arabic) to another (such as English) or vice versa. In addition to it, there are other applications which can check the grammatical, spelling and punctuation errors and help the users to write an error free content in the English language assignments. Offline tools are software applications which are installed in a computer system, iphones, and ipads for the purpose of facilitating the user to learn the English language, undertake assessments and to edit the content. Furthermore it also enhances the quality and accuracy of the content in English language while writing assignments, projects and reports by correcting the grammatical errors, punctuation, spelling, etc and besides some software applications are used to summarize the content, like the summarizing tool. These tools and applications are used very frequently and popularly by the EFL Arabic Speaking Omani students; hence there is a significant need to explore these practices, usage and dependency among the students in the ELT classroom.

THE STUDY'S OBJECTIVES:
This study is an attempt to explore the use of technology among level-1 and level-2 undergraduate students and the potential it has in the future by EFL Arabic-speaking students at the tertiary level in the Sultanate of Oman. The study aims to achieve the following specific objectives:

- To investigate the students’ perceptions on Technological tools and applications in learning.
- The dependency on technology for completing assignments/projects/reports in English modules
- The degree of technology in writing assignments, reports & projects in ELT classrooms.
- The degree of compatibility between Students’ perceptions and the actual efficiency and accuracy in writing the assignments/reports/projects in English.

METHOD AND PROCEDURES:
This study examines the students’ perceptions and the actual practice about the reliance on technology in learning English and writing assignments, projects, and reports in the ELT classroom. To achieve such an objective, a questionnaire was designed and distributed to the target students.

The setting of this study is Majan University College, Muscat Sultanate of Oman, affiliated to the University of Bedfordshire-UK. Majan is a private college with 95% of its students being the Omani speaking Arabic as mother tongue. However, the medium of instruction in the College is English. The entire campus is Wi-Fi enabled facilitating the students and staff to use technology most efficiently with their laptops, ipads, iphone, mobile phones and other latest electronic gadgets.

PARTICIPANTS/SUBJECTS:
A total number of 100 students from two different streams such as, Business and Information Technology in the College took part as a primary source of data for this study. The primary source of data was collected through survey questionnaires in ELT classrooms.

RESEARCH FINDINGS:
Section – I:

![chart showing I use Technology](chart1.png)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level-1:</th>
<th>I use Technology</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

![chart showing I use Technology](chart2.png)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level-2:</th>
<th>I use Technology</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>88%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

![chart showing I use Technology for assignments/projects/reports](chart3.png)

**Level-1 :**
- I use Technology for assignments/projects/reports to:
  - Search for resource materials online: 18%
  - Go online and take help from acquaintances: 13%
  - Improve the quality of the content: 15%
  - Improve the pace of completing & meeting deadlines: 13%
  - Translate content from English to Mother tongue: 23%
  - Translate content from Mother tongue to English: 13%
  - Others: 16%

**Level-2:**
- I use Technology for assignments/projects/reports to:
  - Search for resource materials online: 2%
  - Go online and take help from acquaintances: 18%
  - Improve the quality of the content: 16%
  - Improve the pace of completing & meeting deadlines: 23%
  - Translate content from English to Mother tongue: 13%
  - Translate content from Mother tongue to English: 13%
  - Others: 15%
In the survey 100 undergraduate students randomly picked from level-1 and level-2 belonging to Business and IT streams were given the questionnaire and their responses led us to understand that majority of the students use technology in some form or the other in ELT classrooms. According to the above findings in Section-I, technology is used by 100% of the level -1 and 88% of the level -2 EFL-Arabic speaking students in the ELT classrooms in Oman. These students who claim to use technology have several purposes. These purposes are that the technology helps them in getting vast source of information and reference materials globally from internet; it also helps them in making their job easier and faster. Further they feel that technology helps in translating ideas through software application and online translation websites and to check grammatical errors to write an error free assignment and also to learn the language with the help of online tutorials and some English language software.

Among them the majority of 23% students in level-1 and 33% in level-2 use technology to search resource materials from the internet to download reference materials from online journals, e-books, e-magazines and to write the review of literature on their research projects or reports. Interestingly 18% of level-1 students use technology for translating the content from mother tongue (Arabic) to English for interpreting their own ideas from Arabic to English by some translation software like Babylon, Lingvosoft, Systron, etc., and online application like Google translation, whereas 23% of level-2 students use technology for enhancing the quality of the content through the help of summarizing software, translation software and a very simple application like Microsoft word to do the spell check and a few grammatical errors.

Through the findings we further understand that 16% of level-1 students consider enhancing the quality of the content in their assignments as their third priority with the help of application and software as mentioned above but on the other hand 12% of level-2 students consider taking online help from their acquaintances, through social networking websites like Face book, Twitter, What’s up, Viber, etc., and the other 12% depend on technology for translating the content from English to mother tongue (Arabic) in the case of understanding some concepts given in the assignments, projects and reports as their third priority. In addition 15% of level-1 students rely on technology for translating the content from English to mother tongue (Arabic) for the same purpose as mentioned above has their fourth priority whereas 10% of level-2 students’ rely on technology for translating the content from mother tongue (Arabic) to English as their fourth option.

Interestingly 13% of level-1 students opted to use technology for two different purposes, such as going online to take help from their acquaintances on English language and to improve the pace of completing their assignments to meet their deadline. But 9% of level-2 students use technology only for improving the pace of completing their assignments to meet their deadlines. Finally the least number of level-1 students with 2% and level-2 students with 1% use technology for other online and offline purposes.

These observations clearly indicates that the students are very much dependant on technological tools, gadgets, hardware and software applications to aid themselves in writing and completing their assignments, projects and reports in the most accurate manner possible to anticipate good grades and also to meet the given deadlines.

**Section – II:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>I use Technology for assignments/projects/reports to:</th>
<th>1%</th>
<th>9%</th>
<th>12%</th>
<th>10%</th>
<th>33%</th>
<th>23%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Search for resource materials online</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Go online and take help from acquaintances</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Improve the quality of the content</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Improve the pace of completing &amp; meeting deadlines</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Translate content from English to Mother tongue</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Translate content from Mother tongue to English</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
According to the above findings in Section-II, we have observed about students who feel the usage of technology is useful and not useful on certain aspects. In the first graph, the level-1 students emphasize the need and importance of technology for the accuracy of contents in English language assignments followed by the necessity of translation and the speed during the usage of technology for their English language assignments. On the other hand level-2 students opted for translation as their most important use of technology followed by the accuracy and the speed of technology for their English language assignments.

**Level-1:**
This is a clear indication that level-1 students rely on technology primarily for accuracy by using Microsoft word application for error correction, summarizing software for summarizing reference materials and online dictionaries for vocabulary. They are also under the opinion that translation and speed are factors with less importance for their usage of technology in English language assignments.

**Level-2:**
On the contrary level-2 students give highest priority for the translation of the content of English language assignments with the help of the most popular online application like the Google translation website. They further opine that improving the accuracy of the language and speed are least priority while using technology for the English language assignments. Finally to conclude the graph clearly displays that the minority of level-1 and level-2 students are still not sure of their usage of technology for the purpose of increasing the speed in completing the assignments to meet the deadlines of the assignments in English language.

**Section – III:**

**Level-1:**
The frequency in the usage of technology in English language learning:

Level 2:

- We use technology for completing assignments/projects in ELT classroom:
  - F: 20
  - OC: 25
  - Rarely: 15
  - Never: 10

- We use technology for projects/reports in English:
  - F: 30
  - OC: 25
  - Rarely: 15
  - Never: 10

- Will the grammatical accuracy meet the requirements of assignments in English through the help of technology:
  - F: 30
  - OC: 25
  - Rarely: 15
  - Never: 10

- We rely mostly on technology to write assignments/reports/projects in ELT classroom:
  - F: 20
  - OC: 15
  - Rarely: 5
  - Never: 0

- We rely mostly on technology to learn English Language:
  - F: 20
  - OC: 15
  - Rarely: 5
  - Never: 0
According to the above findings in Section-III, we observe the frequency of the usage of technology by EFL – Arabic speaking students in the ELT classrooms is quite frequent. Though the overall finding seems to be frequent, but there are some differences among the level-1 and level-2 students in their opinion and usage of technology in English language assignments.

**Level-1:**
The level-1 students opine that they occasionally rely on technology to write English language assignments, reports and projects in English language. They further feel that the grammatical accuracy frequently meets the requirements in English language assignments, reports and projects. Furthermore they feel that it is rare that they use technology for completing the assignments and learning English language. Interestingly few students believe that they never rely on technology to complete assignments or to learn English language, though all the assignments in the college are submitted online, which shows that they have either not understood the question or trying to pretend.

**Level-2:**
On the contrary level-2 students believe that they frequently use technology to meet the grammatical accuracy of assignments in English language and occasionally use technology for learning English language. Furthermore they feel that they rarely use technology to learn English language and to complete the assignments in English.

Finally the above findings in section-III, is about the frequency of usage of technology for various purposes by both the level-1 and level-2 students about the use of technology for grammatical accuracy, to learn English language and complete their assignments in time. But most of them believe that they rarely depend completely on technology to write assignments, reports and projects in English language.

**Section – IV:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level-1</th>
<th>Not Sure:</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Without technology we cannot complete the...</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Technology is the easiest and best way to search for...</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Technology has helped me greatly in the process of...</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Technology has helped me to a large extent in...</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It would be extremely impossible to get research...</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Technology helps me in writing an error free English...</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
According to the above findings in Section – IV, we have tested the overall agreement and disagreement of the various uses, trends and purposes of using technology. The level-1 and level-2 students in this section too have a very different and contrasting agreement and disagreement on the use of technology for the English language assignments, reports and projects.

Level-1:
The level-1 students almost agree with all the statements in the graph mentioned above, but except one out of the six statements. Among those who agreed, the most significant one is that they opine that technology has helped them to a large extent in learning English language and technology also helps them in searching reference materials and resources in English assignments, reports and projects. They majorly disagree that without technology they cannot complete any assignments in English language.

Level-2:
The level-2 students are a little different in their agreement and disagreement in the use of technology in English language assignments. Among all the statements, they agree with only 66% of them and the most significant one is that 86% of them agree that technology has helped them greatly in the process of learning English language followed by 66% of them who agree that technology is the easiest and best way to search for ideas, materials and information in English Language assignments and 54% of them agree that technology helped them in scoring higher grades in English language assignments. On the other hand 44% of them disagree with the two statements, that without technology it is extremely impossible to get research materials and information for their assignments and they cannot complete their assignments in English language.

On the whole the findings in section-IV gives us the idea that level-1 and level-2 students have different choices, priorities and purposes in using technology for English language assignments, reports and projects. The most common fact among both the level of students is that they feel that finding information and reference materials for their assignments, reports and projects to write review of literature, quoting some references and secondary source of information is only possible by the use of technology and further the same technology is very helpful in learning English language.

GENERAL COMMENTS ABOUT THE USE OF TECHNOLOGY IN ELT CLASSROOM:
EFL – Arabic speaking level-1 and level-2 undergraduate students have a variety of opinions about the usage of technology in writing English language assignments, reports and projects.

Level-1:
The level-1 students believe that technology helps them to get more information in English Language and complete many assignments in English with the help of translation. They use technology for English learning every day, to find information which is better on the internet and to translate some difficult words. They feel that they can correct errors too.
Further they feel that it can help in improving their English language skills, like grammar, spellings and vocabulary by some online or offline software application. Finally they further add that it is very easy and flexible to improve their English language.

Level-2:
The level-2 students feel that technology helps them to complete the assignments, reports and projects because it helps them to improve the content and check for errors. It also helps them to get more information from different web sites. Some of them said that they use translation programs in the internet to write assignments in their respective subjects. In addition some of them believe that Technology is very important and helpful to study English. Furthermore they use technology to search for new ideas and more information which is not found in the college library. Finally to conclude there is an interesting opinion of a student in contrast to many of his peers, who feels that he doesn’t need technology to learn English language.

CONCLUSION:
In conclusion the EFL Arabic speaking Omani students in ELT classroom use technology for a variety of reasons in English language assignments, reports and projects. Thanks to the Wi-Fi enabled campus in Majan University College, where students are allowed to use technology most efficiently with their laptops, ipads, iphone, mobile phones, etc., during the sessions inside the classroom and outside in any corner of the campus. Though there have been some differences in the purpose and usage among the level-1 and level-2 EFL Arabic speaking Omani students, the level-1 students emphasize more on translating the content with the help of translation software and online applications, but in contrast the level-2 students emphasize more on accuracy of their content in the English language assignments, reports and projects.

According to the overall findings mentioned above, the usage depends more on searching for reference and resource materials for their English language assignments for the purpose of writing literature review, quoting some authors and secondary sources of information. Apart from this purpose they also use technology for translating the content from their mother tongue (Arabic) to English and vice versa, which helps them to interpret their ideas which can be expressed only in Arabic and to comprehend some content materials like questions and concepts which are in English to their mother tongue (Arabic). They have also acknowledged the fact that the use of technology in English language has helped them in learning the language with the help of offline and online tools and applications. It can therefore be said that the frequency of usage and the dependency of technology is quite high to complete their assignments in time and to meet their deadlines. Hence the use of technology has been a boon to these students with the latest state-of-the-art technological tools, gadgets and accessories.

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