

Students' attitudes to online reading in the era of technology at the University of Transport and Communications

Bui Thi Nga

University of Transport and Communications, Campus in Ho Chi Minh City

Corresponding author's email: ngabt_ph@utc.edu.vn

Abstract

Thanks to the remarkable development of technology 4.0, online reading is becoming more popular for students. Higher education institutions encourage their students to participate in online learning courses as well as widening their knowledge by reading online after campus-based learning, especially in the Covid19 epidemic. The study was conducted to investigate the students' attitudes to online reading as well as the effects of online reading for UTC2 students and ways to access information accurately by collecting 200 students from five different majors, including Civil Engineering, Construction Engineering, Economics, Mechanical Engineering, and Information Technology. The qualitative approach with a well-structured questionnaire was used to collect the primary data from respondents. The findings pointed out that the students showed their positive attitudes toward online reading because online reading is an effective way to improve their knowledge and the effectiveness of online reading significantly varies with their reading purposes, technology usage and skills.

Keywords: online reading, online reading effects, UTC2 students.

1. Introduction

In the era of technology 4.0 and the outbreak of the COVID19 epidemic, online reading is one of the most popularly searched keywords to meet students' studying needs worldwide in general and the students at the University of Transport and Communications in particular. Online learning programs require learners to be autonomous and be experts at using online learning tools. For students to widen their professional knowledge, paper and online documents are considered important documents. However, not all students know how to select materials to read online effectively. It is the process for learners to determine goals, reading content, and apply their searching skills. Therefore, a study needs to be done to investigate how effective online reading is as well as its drawbacks.

2. Literature review

In order to explore how online reading affects learners' knowledge acquisition, the part aims to build up a theoretical framework on which the learners' online reading will be grounded. Hence, this part focuses on the definitions of online reading, its effective and drawbacks in the previous study, and the related studies of online reading techniques.

2.1 Online reading

Scientific areas in general and in education, in particular, have been influenced by developments in the field of science and technology. This promotes the technological infrastructure developed for educational organizations, particularly how learning changes rapidly. Currently, online reading is considered a popular way to widen readers' knowledge in the world. Apart from reading printed materials, online reading is the

process of extracting meanings from a text that is in a digital format.

2.1.1 Effectiveness of online reading

Nowadays, it is easy to access a huge amount of information through the Internet in digital forms without cost and without going anywhere. According to Hira and Munira (2018), reading requires concentration because of the mental process. However, on the Internet, so many things are available that distract readers' attention, and focus on the required information is really challenging. In contrast, the authors report that online reading enhances learners' reading interest. In addition, Karim, Hasan, and Shahriza (2011) determine that the young combine online reading in their learning mostly because of the availability of an increasing amount of information and entertainment. Furthermore, Liu (2005) also supports that the growth of online information available influences readers' behaviors towards online reading, and people spend more time on online reading. Hence, it is considered as imperative need to understand the reading phenomena for the benefits of reading.

In the article by Akpokodje (2016), they identify that online reading is used among learners all the time. Readers prefer online reading for information seeking because of its availability of cross-references and hyperlinks. As can be seen, learners read materials as well as information of all fields through the Internet.

Verma and Malvyaya (2010) explored that the internet and digital media impact learners' reading habits. Based on the results of the comparative study, it showed the reading habit of traditional library readers changed due to the electronic environment. The Internet provides easy access to portable information. It has a great source on Internet for sharing and receiving a large amount of information. As a result, the learners can read worldwide information in spite of staying at home.

2.1.2 Drawbacks of online reading

Apart from the advantages of online reading as above, several disadvantages need to be improved.

Ajayi, Shorunke, and Aboyade (2014) describe that a key factor hindering the use of electronic resources is poor internet facilities. In order for learners to read online effectively, internet-connected devices play an important role in fulfilling their purposes of reading. Reading online in rural areas is challenging for students.

In the article by Loan (2012), the impact of internet surfing on reading practices and choices of students' net generation is investigated. The result revealed that online reading makes interactive and superficial reading increased while sequential reading, concentrated reading, and in-depth reading decreased. Additionally, there has been an increase in the reading of news, reviews, general information, selected fields, and religious text through internet surfing, while reading of literature has decreased.

Noticeably, Mokhtari, Reichard, and Gardner (2019) revealed that students mainly used the Internet for entertainment. A majority of the students determined that they enjoyed Internet more than academic purposes reading. As mentioned above, students go online reading for relaxing more than acquiring academic information.

Lazonder, Biermans, and Wopereis (2018) determined that the electronic reading effectiveness may be varied as a function of individual variables in terms of learners' level of technological experience or their prior knowledge of the content area. The result defined the learners who are experts at technology usage were faster, more successful, more efficient, and more effective in the website location tasks. Moreover,

learners' ability seems to be influenced to navigate through content, make choices among several document links, and understand content and information sources by prior knowledge. As a result, first-year students or low technology students seem to be difficult to read online most effectively.

2.2 Research Questions

In order to determine what the students' attitudes toward online reading at UTC2, and based on the literature review, previous studies, and the research problem, this research endeavors to answer the following questions so that it is to achieve the objectives of the study:

- a) What are the UTC2 students' attitudes toward online reading?
- b) What influences on UTC2 students' online reading in the era of technology 4.0?
- c) How do UTC2 students read online materials most effectively?

3. Methods

3.1 Pedagogical Setting & Participants

The Covid19 pandemic seriously affects health and all living aspects. Many schools, colleges, and universities have been closed. Online reading is an appropriate way to widen learners' knowledge in the case of homeschooling as well as direct schooling. Because of the Covid 19 pandemic, the University of Transport and Communications (UTC2) has boldly applied online learning to teaching activities to ensure knowledge for students during break time. Hence, online reading has been required to enhance learners' information acquisition. However, there is a major important question in doubt: Do the students show their positive attitudes toward online reading as well as does online reading offer any effectiveness and drawbacks for UTC2 students? If yes, what is a good way for online reading?

This research was employed to examine the students' attitudes toward online reading at UTC2. The target population consisted of 200 students majoring in Civil Engineering, Construction Engineering, Economics, Mechanical Engineering, and Information Technology. All participants use the Internet and reader of online materials regularly.

3.2 Design of the Study

This study was employed to examine the effects of online reading. To fulfil the objectives of the study, the qualitative approach is applied.

A 3 Likert questionnaire is designed to fulfill the objectives of the study. This questionnaire consists of three parts. The first part is demographic questions in terms of the name (optional), gender, major, and schooling year. The second part consists of questions used to investigate the effectiveness and drawbacks of online reading. The last part is several open questions relating to some effective online reading techniques applied by the students of UTC2. To ensure the credibility of the questionnaire, a pilot study was conducted in advance. One interview meeting was carried out in the classroom after the questionnaire.

3.3 Data collection & analysis

A Vietnamese questionnaire version was delivered to the classes by the co-workers. All participants were instructed clearly to answer the questions. Participants were asked to fill in the questionnaire during the

lecture.

4. Results/Findings and discussion

4.1 Respondent Demographics

According to Figure1, 148 (74%) males and 52 (26%) females are included in the study. The students' ability in using the computer and technology is at a moderate level in general (76%) (Figure 2).

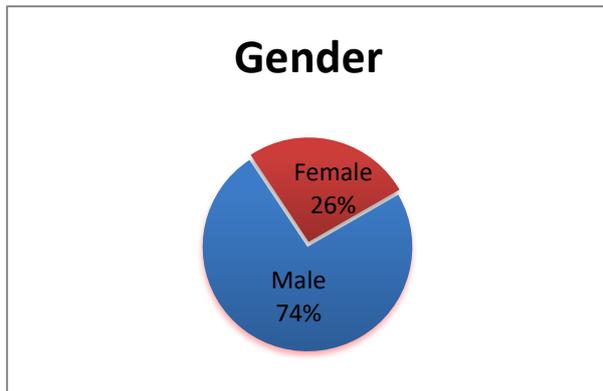


Figure 1. Respondents' distribution according to gender

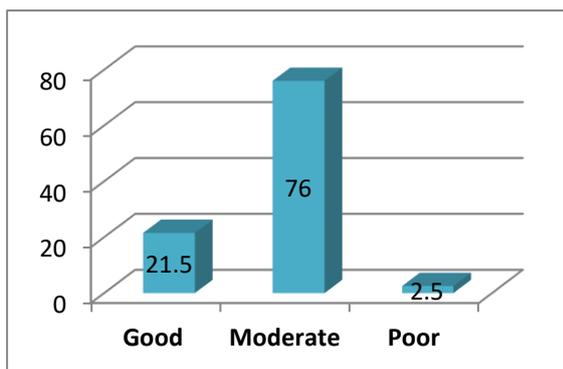


Figure 2. Respondents' distribution according to ability in using the technology

Table 1 below revealed the distribution of the students according to majors. As can be seen, 25% of the respondents are from Civil Engineering, respondents majoring in Construction Engineering are 24%, 20.5% from Economics, 13.5% from Mechanical Engineering, and 17% from Information Technology.

Table 1. Respondents' distribution according to majors

Major	Frequency	Percentage
Civil Engineering	50	25%
Construction Engineering	48	24%
Economics	41	20.5%
Mechanical Engineering	27	13.5%
Information Technology	34	17%
Total	200	100%

Table 2 illustrated the respondents' schooling years. 33.5% are freshmen, and mostly 79 respondents (39.5%) are second-year ones. Fifty-four respondents (27%) are the number of the third-year ones.

Table 2. Respondents' distribution according to schooling year

	Frequency	Schooling year	Percentage
	67	1 st year	33.5%
	79	2 nd year	39.5%
	54	3 rd year	27%
Total	200		100%

4.2 Results

4.2.1 Spending time on online reading

As far as online reading in Table 3 showed, the majority of the respondents spend 1-2 hours a day on electronic reading. Simultaneously, 36% identified they read more than 2 hours, and 22.5% spend less than 1-hour reading materials online.

Table 3. Spending time on online reading

Spending time on online reading	Frequency	Percentage
30 min- 1 hour	45	22.5%
1-2 hours	83	41.5%
More than 2 hours	72	36 %

4.2.2 Students' online reading behavior

Table 4. Students' online reading behavior

Online reading behavior	Frequency	Percentage
Direct read on the Internet	97	48.5%
Download and read on the computer screen	63	31.5%
Download and print out then reading	40	20%

As can be seen from Table 4, the majority of 48.5% of respondents agreed that they directly read on the Internet because their portable devices are connected to the Internet, and it is easy to access information anywhere and anytime. 31.5% of participants first download information and then read it on a gadget or computer screen. The interview findings revealed why learners would like to download materials because of electricity failure and poor internet connections. 20% of respondents pointed out they download and print out materials than read them when they realize they need to read materials.

4.2.3 Students' online reading attitudes

The 3 Likert scale questionnaire in terms of agree, neutral, and disagree was designed to collect the data. As table 5 identified, most of the respondents admitted that online reading is an effective way to learn and relax. Online materials improve their independent learning skills because it is easy for learners to access and retrieve any information through the Internet. There is brief and concise information on any topic that can be getting from Google. Hyperlinks and related links about the topic provided help to understand and comprehend the topic, which helps to develop the topic's understanding. In addition, online materials give information about different subjects. Currently, the Internet makes it possible to connect the world easily. Students are able to catch up with the latest information about social events as well as academic materials.

Furthermore, it could not deny that online reading is a relaxing way which is popular, especially for young learners. In general, most of the students show their positive attitudes toward online reading.

Table 5. Students' online reading attitudes

Questions	Frequency	Agreement percentage
Q5.1 Online reading improves my independent learning skills.	178	89%
Q5.2 I can take information about field subjects.	180	90%
Q5.3 Online reading makes it possible to connect the world.	200	100%
Q5.4 Online reading enhances my ability to deliver lectures.	154	77%
Q5.5 Online reading helps me to do research better due to online materials.	123	61.5%
Q5.6 When I read online, it is a good way to enhance my vocabulary, especially in English.	98	49%
Q5.7 Online professional forum helps learners to get the latest information about my major.	134	67%
Q5.8 Online reading helps me to relax and get information all the time in all places.	200	100%

4.2.4 Online reading difficulties

To find out the drawbacks of online reading, a questionnaire with a 3 Likert scale was used to collect the data. All the students pointed out reading online gives them different values that depend on their different reading purposes. To get the information needed, students are expected to follow the reading purposes and close various entertainment online pages. The interview results and questionnaire clarified the students with good technology skills like information technology students can search information concisely and quickly. To fulfill online reading effectiveness, learners need to be well-prepared for gadgets or computers and ask their lecturers about available pages or online materials to read online more effectively and academically.

Table 6. Online reading drawbacks

Questions	Frequency	Agreement percentage
Q6.1 I sometimes get hard because of electricity disruption and poor internet connection.	184	92%
Q6.2 I have some difficulty in finding out research/ academic materials.	175	87.5%
Q6.3 Low technology is an obstacle to search for information concisely and quickly.	194	97%
Q6.4 I do not know academic information webpages.	89	44.5%
Q6.5 I am easy to be distracted because of numerous information/ webpages.	181	90.5%
Q6.6 Wasting lots of time to read online if I do not have any purposes of reading.	156	78%

4.2.5 Effective ways of online reading

The findings in the interview revealed that in order for learners to read materials from the Internet effectively, it requires learners to determine their purposes of reading. Learners themselves should be autonomous with good independent learning skills. Moreover, because of an amount of various information

from the Internet, learners are expected to master precise webpages and concise information. As an instructor at school, he should give some suggestions of online materials relating to learners' majors or professions. One of the best ways to avoid being distracted when reading materials online is to close social network pages or even disconnecting Wi-Fi.

5. Conclusion

Based on the results of the study, the following recommendations should be suggested. Firstly, online reading in modern technology can be applied in campus-based activities as well as in E-learning. Secondly, experiment studies for further comparisons between online reading effects and book-based reading should be conducted. Furthermore, identifying other variables in terms of students' major, attitudes that may impact online reading effectiveness is recommended for further study.

The study is conducted to find out the students' attitudes toward online reading. The study results showed the students had positive attitudes toward online reading and clarified the effectiveness and drawbacks of online reading. However, this study has found that learners' purposes and technology skills impacted the online reading effectiveness. Hence, to control such drawbacks as mentioned, learners should be autonomous in their independent learning skills and improve their technology skills. As a teacher, he has to select and introduce precise online webpages to his learners, especially freshmen.

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Biodata

Currently, Bui Thi Nga is a teacher at University of Transport and Communications in HCMC, Vietnam (UTC2). To be honest, she is in charge of teaching English for students following the program of CEFR, so her best teaching skills are speaking and listening. At the university, she has just done several minor research studies on teaching English for non-majored English students so far and she takes up doing this study for the first time this year.