

The Effectiveness of Using Interactive Electronic Books in Teaching English for 6th Grade Students in Libya

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Abstract:

The purpose of this study was to determine whether electronic books have a positive effect on the Libyan 6th grade students in terms of language improvement. The traditional 6th grade books were transferred into electronic books so that teachers and students can use them to get the best learning results. An empirical study was conducted on 46 students in Asma bent Abu Baker School, Tripoli - Libya. The participant were in the 6th grade level aged (10 – 11) they were divided into an experimental group and a control group, 23 students in each group. The control group was

taught by using the traditional books while the experimental group was taught by using the electronic books. Pre- and post-literacy measures were set to find out the actual level of the students before and after the experiment. The findings revealed that there were significant differences between the two groups. That is, the experimental group achieved better learning results than the control group.

Introduction:

Using technology became very significant in almost all fields of life. One of the most important fields, education. There are many advantages of using technology in the classroom. These include more active learning, diversified teaching methods and visual stimulation (Dale, 1969). In language teaching and learning, we have a lot to choose from the world of technology such as TVs, Computers, the Internet, emails, audio cassettes, and videos. One of these types of multimedia technology is the invention of electronic books. Many researchers emphasized the importance of electronic books especially in teaching. Some of them stated that e-books offer increased interactive opportunities to promote child engagement, thus increasing child outcomes (de Jong *et al* 2003). However, according to the researchers' best knowledge none of these studies have been conducted in Libya before, so this study is conducted with two main objectives. Firstly, determining whether using electronic books in teaching English as a foreign language to 6th grade students is efficient to develop the students' English language. Secondly, transferring the traditional books of the 6th grade (the course book, workbook, and the teacher's book) into electronic books for further use in the future.

Review of Literature:

"Technology lies at the heart of the globalization process; affecting education, work and culture" (Graddol, 1997). We can no longer separate education from technology, because children are exposed to technology from a young age. In a study conducted by the Kaiser Foundation, Rideout, Vandewatr, and Wartella (2003) reported that children from birth to six spend an average of two hours per-day using screen media like TV, computers and video games. The same children only spend approximately 39 minutes a day reading or being read to by others.

Therefore it is not surprising that electronic books have a positive effect on young learners. The importance of electronic books is a wild field of study. It cannot be restricted in one direction or another. Some indicated the reason of this usefulness refer to the rich multimedia features like recordings, animations, music, videos and various sound effects as Korat (2007) explains in his research. Grimshaw (2007) believes that rich multimedia features such as audio narration, sound effects and animation embedded into electronic books can help children to improve their reading comprehension skills. We certainly found this to be true in our study, when the group with electronic books scored higher and learned at a faster pace than their counterparts who were taught using traditional books. Children were also excited and entertained by features electronic books provided in comparison to traditional ones.

Chera (2003), Wood (2003) and Wise (1989) are among the researchers who have proven that electronic books contribute to the enhancement of children's phonological awareness. According to Lewis (1997), grammar skill can be demonstrated and reinforced using electronic books. The teacher can direct students to highlight, italicizing, changing

the font size, colour or type a specific part of speech (e.g. nouns, verbs). Lewis added that using electronic book as a medium for studying grammar is much more motivating for students than writing with a pencil. Korat (2008), demonstrated that children showed improvement in understanding the meaning of the words. Children with other physical and learning disabilities can also benefit from using electronic books in the classroom. Their ability to translate text-to-speech gives young readers confidence and greatly boosts their self-esteem (Rhodes,2007).

Our research echoed the research done by previous scholars, confirming the importance of using technology in the classroom and its effectiveness in learning in children of all backgrounds.

Definition of electronic book :

It is quite difficult to restrict the definitions of electronic books because each d defined them according to his/her point of view. Shiratuddin *et al* (2003) stated that electronic books are a type of e-content based learning object whose benefits may include: hyper linking, customizability, greater distribution, low costs, search ability, and other multimedia features. "An e-book is an integration of the classical print structure with an electronic environment giving additional value added features that paper cannot provide" (Landoni *et al* 2000). Korat (2004) defined electronic books as an electronic form of a book with features similar to those of a printed book including pages that turn, and digital features that can assist the reader such as recordings, text highlighting, and hypermedia (e.g., videos, animations, and sound effects). Maynard (2005) stated that electronic books can be defined as any group of text in a digital format that is to be read and displayed on a computer

screen. They can be accessed in a myriad of different ways including through the internet, on a CD-ROM or by many of the portable e-book readers. Many types of electronic books are also available for free download or purchase including popular fiction, non-fiction, as well as educational titles. According to the researchers' view of literature, electronic books play a major role in many fields of study including reading. Many researches have been conducted in order to ensure the positive effects of electronic books on the reading literacy. One of these researches was conducted by Moore and Zabucky (1995). They compared young and older learners' reading performance under self-paced conditions from texts presented by an electronic book and on a printed page. The findings were that both groups achieved better reading comprehension from an electronic book. Many researches emphasized the significant impact of electronic books on phonological literacy as well. Voice narration and recordings involved in electronic books aid children in pronouncing particular words where they can listen to those recordings and repeat them more than once. A study by Korat and Shamir (2007) proved that the children who used electronic books to learn showed better phonological awareness than those who learned traditionally. Electronic books can also help students develop their writing skills. Trenchs (1996) discovered that using electronic books as a supplement to the classroom curriculum can be effective. In his research, the students voluntarily used electronic books to write their thoughts and ideas. They were self-motivated to write in a new and creative way. One of the benefits of using electronic books included the opportunity it gave them to edit and revise. Many researches emphasized the impact of electronic books on students' progress. Korat and Shamir's study (2007) proved that children who used electronic books showed a great progress in their level. Electronic books have also proven to

be able to help young learners with brain disabilities such as autism (autistic children have a mental illness which causes problems with communicating and forming relationships). One study stated that comprehension and reading skills of autistic children increased when they began to learn with electronic books. Their electronic programme consisted of flashcards with words on them, letter significant and short reading passages. The children showed improvement in learning of vocabulary (Grant, 2004).

Methodology:

The study is based on an experimental research design, in which pre and post tests were set at the beginning and at the end of the study in order to determine whether using electronic books in teaching English as a foreign language to 6th grade students is efficient to develop the students' English language or not. The study was carried out for four weeks. The researchers designed a pretest for the two groups to examine the level of the students before the experiment. A post-test was given to the participant at the end of the experiment based on the lessons presented during the experimental period to examine the effects of using electronic books on the students differentiated by the traditional method of teaching. The pre-test and the posttest were parallel; they contained four similar questions that included different skills(see appendix 1). The students answered both tests (the pre-test and the post test) using pen and paper. It was made sure that all the conditions were appropriate in both tests. The time limit was 45 minutes for each test and for each group. The two groups took both the pre-test and the post test in their classrooms so the environment was the same

for both groups. The two tests were both designed and corrected by the researchers.

The Sample and Context:

The study was based on a group of forty six students during the academic year 2013. Two classrooms of the same size were randomly selected (according to the school's division of the classes). The classes consisted of 26 males and 20 females. The level of the students in the two classes varied; there were excellent, good and poor students. These students were registered as full-time students at Asma Bent Abu Baker Primary School which is located in Zanata; Tripoli - Libya. Their ages ranged between eleven and twelve. The students were divided according to the school's division of classes into two groups; an experimental group and a control group. The experimental group consisted of 23 students. This group received special treatment; they were taught by using the electronic books. The control group consisted of 23 students and taught by the traditional course book.

The material (the course book):

The title of the course book that was used in this study is English for Libya/ Primary 6 Pupil's Books; the course book and the work book; written by Terry Phillips. The two books (the course book and the work book) consist of eight units. These books were used to teach the control group. The same books were transferred into electronic books to be used with the experimental group due to the fact that there are no electronic books for this grade.

The procedures:

Teaching the control group:

The researchers made sure to follow the lesson plan prepared by the classroom teacher. These lessons normally depend on the board and the book. In this group, the students were given the same lessons as the experimental group. There was no apparent change in the classroom environment due to the fact that the students were used to this method of teaching.

Teaching the experimental group:

The students of the experimental group were seated in a library where the data show was attached to the computer for them to watch the display. The screen was big enough, allowing all the students to clearly see the content of the e-books. All the students paid attention to the screen.

The researchers taught the last two units using the electronic books. The lessons were displayed quite dramatically. It was rather interesting as it showed the contents of the lesson with sound effects and animations at an appropriate speed, in addition to audio explanations and pictures. The students were also taught by using the electronic work book in which there were many exercises and activities. The students received appropriate feedback when they answered the exercises so that there was an interaction between the learners and the electronic book.

The following section contains sample lesson plans using the electronic books as well as using the traditional method of teaching.

Sample lesson 1 (For the control group)

Lesson plan:

Class: 6th grade.

Time: 40 minutes.

The topic: Sports and Activities_ lesson1

Material: The 6th grade books and the board.

Aims: The students will practice and learn new vocabulary related to the topic and practice some exercises at the end.

-The steps of the lesson:

Step1: First of all, the teacher warmed up the students by giving a general idea about the lesson, and then the students were asked to open the pupil's book.

(This step took about 5 minutes)

Step2: After that, the teacher wrote the new words on the board, and the students copied them into their notebooks. (This step took about 8 minutes)

Step3: The teacher started reading each word out aloud, and the students repeated after listening to each word. (This step took about 7 minutes)

Step4: Finally, the teacher asked the students to open the activity book and do the exercises individually. These exercises were finding the words, matching the verbs with the activities and making a conversation. After

that, the students answered the exercises with the teacher. (This step took about 20 minutes).

Sample lesson 2 (for the experimental group)

Lesson plan:

Class: 6th grade.

Time: 40 minutes.

The topic: Sports and Activities_ lesson1

Material: the electronic books

Aims: The students will practice and learn new vocabulary related to the topic and practice some exercises at the end.

-The steps of the lesson:

Before the class starts, the teacher prepared the data show, and plugged it in the laptop to display the e-books. The following are the steps of teaching the lesson:

Step 1: First of all, the teacher warmed up the students by giving a general idea about the lesson and then the students saw some pictures and words displayed in the electronic book; each picture was displayed in one slide with its word under it.

(This step will took about 5 minutes)

Step2: After they saw the pictures, they listened to the recordings of these words and they repeated after them until they mastered pronouncing the

words correctly. (This step took about 7 minutes)

Step3: In this step, the teacher emphasized the spelling part; the teacher here taught the students the right spelling of the words one by one and then the students were asked to write the words in their notebooks. (This step took about 8 minutes)

Step4: Finally, the students did various activities from the workbook displayed in the electronic book such as finding the words, matching the verbs with the activities and making a conversation. In finding the words activity, the students saw a word search. In the corner, they saw a picture of the word they have to search for. When they found the word, the teacher clicked on it and it was circled in red. After that, the next picture will appeared and the students searched for its word again. The students in this activity answered orally and the teacher clicked on the word to show them whether it's right or wrong. After they finished this activity, the students were praised with a colourful slide telling them "good job" with animated pictures. After that, another slide appeared. Here the students were asked to match the verbs with the activities. The teacher picked a number of students to answer themselves using the teacher's computer. First of all, they had to click on the verb so the colour of the verb was changed. After that, the students chose the activity. If their answer was wrong, they heard a sound of a voltage. However, if their answer was correct, a red arrow appeared connecting the verb with the activity. After finishing this activity, the students were praised by a sound of applause and a 'well done' phrase. Finally, another slide appeared. Here the students were asked to read the sentences from the slide show and respond to them so that they have to choose the right speech bubble in order to make an appropriate

conversation. Here the students answered the exercise they see on the slide show orally and the teacher clicked on the answer to show them whether it's right or wrong. If their choice was correct, they were praised but if their answer was wrong they heard a sound of a hammer so that they will have to answer again. At the end of the activity, there was a praising phrase with an animated picture. (This step took about 20 minutes).

Analysis of the Study:

In order to ensure the validity of the results, the students' marks were analysed in two ways. The researchers analysed each question individually (the number of the students who answered correctly and incorrectly). The students' marks were also analysed by using the T-test analysis.

The pretest results:

Two groups of about similar level were randomly selected. In order to assure that the two classes were equal, a pre-test was conducted by the researchers for both classes. The results of the pretest showed that the mean of the control group was 19.91 while the mean of the experimental group was 17.19. These results indicate that there wasn't much difference between the two groups.

The post-test results:

The results of the post-test for the experimental and the control group were analyzed in two different ways. First, each question was analyzed according to the number of the students who answered correctly or incorrectly. However, in order to get clearer results, both the average and

the standard deviation of the last outcomes of the two groups were counted at the end.

Question one completion:

Group	No. of Students	Question	Answers			
			Correct		Incorrect	
			No.	%	No.	%
Experimental	23	1	16	70%	7	30%
Control	23	1	8	35%	15	65%

Table (1) the completion question

As shown in table (1), sixteen students in the experimental group (70%) answered this question correctly, while only eight students (35%) in the control group gave correct answers to this question. These results show that the results of the experimental group are better than the control group with the difference of 35% which is a relatively clear difference.

Question two circling the odd words:

In the circling the odd word question, twenty two students (96%) in the experimental group managed to circle the right answers whereas only sixteen students (70%) in the control group chose the right answers. These results show that the results of the experimental group are better than the control group with the difference of 26% as shown in table (2).

Group	No. of Students	Question	Answers			
			Correct		Incorrect	
			No.	%	No.	%
Experimental	23	2	22	96%	1	4%
Control	23	2	16	70%	7	30%

Table (2) circling the odd word question

Question three matching:

Group	No. of Students	Question	Answers			
			correct		Incorrect	
			No.	%	No.	%
Experimental	23	3	21	91%	2	9%
Control	23	3	19	83%	4	17%

Table (3) the matching question

It is clear from table (3) that twenty one students in the experimental group (91%) answered this question correctly, while 19 students (83%) in the control group gave correct answers to this question. These results show that the results of the experimental group are better than the control group with the difference of 8%.

Question Four the spelling question:

Table (4) shows that seventeen students in the experimental group (74%) answered this question correctly, while 13 students (56%) in the control group gave correct answers to this question. These results show that the experimental group did much better than the control group.

Group	No. of Students	Question	Answers			
			correct		incorrect	
			No.	%	No.	%
Experimental	23	4	17	74%	6	26%
Control	23	4	13	56%	10	44%

Table (4) the spelling question

T-test analysis:

In order to find out whether the differences between the two groups were significant or not, the T-test was applied. The hypothesis states that there are significant differences (level $p = 0.05$) in the achievement of students in the English language subject, between the experimental group and the control group. To validate the hypothesis, the arithmetical averages and standard deviations of the posttest between the two groups were calculated.

Group	Number	Average	Standard deviation	Value T.	Significant differences	The level of significance
Experimental	23	21.7	9.8	1.47	0.000	Statistically significant
Control	23	17.8	8.2			

Table 5: T test for comparison between the experimental and the control group in the post test exam scores

It is clear from table (5) that the arithmetic average scores of the experimental group is (21.7), with the standard deviation (9.8) and the arithmetic average of the control group is (17.8) with the standard deviation of (8.2). Here we note that the average scores of the experimental group are greater than the average scores of the control group, and the T value is (1.47). This value is statistically significant at the level of significance (0.000) that means we can accept the first hypothesis, in other words, there are significant differences between the two groups. Moreover, the P value is (≤ 0.05). This indicates the presence of statistically significant differences between the experimental and control group due to the method of teaching. It concludes accepting the first hypothesis, that there are

statistically significant differences between the experimental and control groups, in favour of the experimental group.

Results in comparing the pre-test and post-test for the experimental group:

Experimental group	Number	Average	Standard deviation	Value T.	Significant differences	The level of significance
Pre-test	23	17.19	8.5	2.71	0.000	Statistically significant
Post-test	23	21.7	9.7			

Table6: T test for comparison between the pre-test and the post-test of the experimental group

In order to ensure the validity of the results of the experiment, the researchers analyzed the marks of the experimental group in the pre-test and the post-test using the t-test criterion. The hypothesis states that there are significant differences (level $p = 0.05$) in the achievement of students in the English language subject, in the experimental group in the pre-test and the post-test. It is clear from table (6) that the arithmetic average scores in the pre-test is (17.19), with the standard deviation (8.5) and the arithmetic average in the post-test is (21.7) with the standard deviation of (9.7). Here we note that the average scores of the post-test are greater than the average scores in the pre-test, and the T value is (2.71). This value is statistically significant at the level of significance (0.000) that means we can accept the first hypothesis, in other words, there are significant differences between the pre-test and the post-test. Moreover, the P value is (≤ 0.05). This indicates the presence of statistically significant differences between the pre-test and the post-test due to the method of teaching. It concludes accepting the first hypothesis, that there are statistically significant differences between the pre-test and the post-test, in favour of the post-test.

Discussion:

The basic hypothesis of this study is that if young learners are exposed to English through electronic books, their English language will be improved. According to the results, this hypothesis has been proven correct. It also answers the research question as to whether the use of electronic books to teach English language to young learners (6th grade pupils) contributes to better learning results compared to the traditional method of teaching. From the test results that have just been shown, electronic books can actually contribute to better learning in comparison to traditional books.

The findings of this study have also confirmed the value of electronic books as a tool in the English language classroom. However, the current findings are not surprising. The findings of this study support the results of many previous studies such as Korat and Shamir's study (2007), Maynard (2005), Blackstock and Miller (1994) and De Jong et al (2000). All of these studies indicated that using electronic books in teaching English language has positive effects on the students' language improvement.

Conclusion:

This study was set out to determine whether electronic books have a positive effect on the Libyan 6th grade students. Although the current study is based on a limited sample of participants, the findings of this investigation show that electronic books have a positive impact on the students' learning literacy. It is true that creating an interactive electronic book is not an easy task and it is very time and labor consuming but the results are worth the hard work.

Electronic books are a useful educational tool. It is very important, perhaps necessary, in improving the quality of teaching and learning as well as changing the learning environment. These technical products give the students new and exciting ways to express themselves. Besides, electronic books add more interest to the class. The simple words of praise that electronic books offer have an impact on the students' attitude towards learning; they make them excited to receive the positive messages and sounds after they answer the questions correctly. Not only E-books provide the students the chance to understand better, it also allows them to watch videos and do activities that are relevant to what the class was currently studying. Furthermore, it was also found that electronic books are beneficial because they increase motivation; all the students in the experimental group wanted to participate and use the electronic books. As a result, the students who used the electronic books received higher scores than those who were taught traditionally.

In conclusion, it could be argued that electronic books lead to better language development when teachers use them effectively in teaching.

Recommendations:

Based on the results of this study, a number of recommendations can be given to the educational authorities and teachers of young learners, in addition to further studies as the findings of this study that can be used as a foundation for further research.

It is highly recommended for the educational authorities to:

- offer training courses for teachers in how to make their own electronic books to teach their students or provide packages that contain E-books.

- support using technology in the classrooms in order to make the learning process easier and more effective.
- provide all the necessary technological facilities in schools, colleges and universities in order to inspire teachers to use them in their classes.

It's also recommended for the teachers to:

- obtain e-books that are related to the curriculum they're teaching or make their own e-books.
- take advantage of the electronic books' features to enhance the learning environment.

For further studies:

- It is recommended that further experimental investigations be done to estimate the effects of electronic books on the students' critical thinking.
- More broadly, research is also needed to determine whether electronic books have a positive impact on older learners such as preparatory or high school students.
- It is also suggested to investigate the project's findings in future studies in more detail.

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Appendix 1
Pretest

Q1- Complete the sentences
(to- five –past- o'clock- one- quarter- half)



It's three



It's Past



It's Quarter



It's nine

Q2- Circle the odd one out:

- 1- Lemonade- milkshake- village- apple juice
- 2- Lack- dog- bird- monkey
- 3- Dress- blouse- socks- mountain
- 4- Dinner room- street- toilet- sitting room
- 5- Mall- aunt- mum- uncle
- 6- Nice- town- short- new

Q3- Match the questions with the answers:

Has Huda got two brothers?	I am 11
Where are you from?	5 o'clock
Who is Ali's sister?	Yes, she has
How old are you?	My brother
Who is that?	Tripoli
What's the time?	Huda

Q4- a- Complete the words:

_c_m_ _ a

_ ra _ _ _

_ m _ t _ r _ _ _ e

_ I _ _ _ le

C _ m _ _ t _ _

_ e _ _ v _ _ I _ _

b- Write these numbers:

6

8

3

12

5

Posttest

Q1_ Complete the sentences:

(Colour- Cut- Draw- Draw- Join- Push- Write)

- 1- a line
- 2- an x on the line.
- 3- the points.
- 4- the numbers one to six
- 5- the spinner.
- 6- out the spinner.
- 7- a pencil through the middle.

Q2- Circle the odd one out:

- 1- Table tennis- swimming- shirt- football
- 2- Like- doesn't like- play

3- Fishing- go to school- reading

4- Ali- go- Libya

5- Spinner- Counter- move

6- CD player- get up- video- fax machine

Q3- Match the two parts of the sentences:

- | | |
|---------------|--------------|
| 1- Spin | a ladder |
| 2- I am on | turn |
| 3- Go up | the spinner |
| 4- Go down | your counter |
| 5- It's yours | a snake |
| 6- Move | six |

Q4- a – Complete the words:

Th _t _ _ n

Tw _ n _ y

F _ f _ ee _

Si _ te _ _

_ ev _ n _ ee _

E _ g _ te _ _

b- Write these numbers:

14

18

20

13

17