

# **The Internet and EFL Teaching: The Reactions of UAE Secondary School English Language Teachers**

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## **Abstract**

*This study investigates the current status of using the Internet in UAE secondary schools, the English language teachers' beliefs of the benefits of the Internet in EFL teaching, their willingness to integrate this technology in foreign language (FL) teaching and the concerns they might have due to classroom Internet integration. The study seeks answers to the following questions. 1) To what extent are UAE secondary school English language teachers familiar with the Internet? 2) What is the status of using the Internet in EFL teaching? 3) Are UAE secondary school English language teachers aware of the benefits of using the Internet in EFL classrooms? 4) To what extent are they willing to use the Internet in EFL classrooms? And 5) what kinds of concerns do they have regarding using the Internet in EFL classrooms? A questionnaire was sent to 250 English language secondary school teachers in six main cities. The results showed that teachers are familiar with modern technologies, willing to integrate the Internet in teaching despite some of the concerns they have. However, it was very surprising to find out that the majority of the teachers are not currently using the Internet technology in their EFL teaching.*

## **1. Introduction**

For many years, teaching English in the Arab countries, as it is in many parts of the world, has been characterized by the use of traditional and grammar-oriented approach with limited information resources (e.g. the teacher, the textbook and chalkboard). The outcomes are students who can hardly communicate in the target language (Hennigan, 1999; Guefrachi and Troudi 1999). Recently, FL researchers and teachers have started advocating using computers and the Internet in FL classrooms hoping to solve some of the problems that encounter teachers and students alike. Several studies have been conducted and their findings have confirmed that the introduction of computers and the Internet into FL classrooms effectively enhances language learning, enriches the teaching and learning environment, and allows teachers and students to access authentic FL materials and interact with native and non-native

speakers from all over the globe (Warschauer, 1997, 2000; Hanson-Smith, 1997; Kamhi-Stein, 2002; Stepp-Greany, 2002; Brandl, 2002; Parks S. et al, 2003; Pedroni, 1996).

In spite of the fact that modern technology studies in the field of education, in general, and FL, in particular, are on the forefront of national and international educational conferences and journals, yet only a few of them have added substantial evidence that could contribute to the construction of a theoretical framework related to the use of computers and the Internet technology in teaching (Warschauer, 1997; Chafe, 1999). This framework needs data driven from both quantitative and qualitative research in order to investigate the multisidedness and interconnected nature of the teaching/learning process: the learners' interpsychological and intrapsychological processes that take place during technologically based learning experiences, the lasting effect of using the Internet in FL teaching, students' perceptions and attitudes towards the Internet, and the teachers' attitudes, readiness, willingness, and concerns about using the Internet in EFL teaching. This paper addresses some teacher-related factors regarding using the Internet in FL classrooms. The study, therefore, attempts to answer the following five main questions. 1) To what extent are UAE secondary school English language teachers familiar with the Internet? 2) What is the status of using the Internet in EFL teaching in the UAE? 3) Are UAE secondary school English language teachers aware of the benefits of using the Internet in EFL classrooms? 4) To what extent are they willing to use the Internet in EFL classrooms? And 5) what are the concerns that they might have regarding using the Internet in EFL classrooms??

## **2. The Significance of the Study**

The study is significant for two reasons. First, the world is dramatically changing in a rapid and unpredictable way. Globalization and informational technology have become the trademarks of this era and are likely to transform the teaching/learning process from being dominated by traditional practices emphasizing the learning of rules and memorization of information to a kind of learning process that focuses on communicative skills, critical thinking, and meaningful language practices (Warschauer, 2000). The emerging of a new informational society requires schools to equip students with special skills so that they can function properly in this modern society. Thus, old educational programs need to be

restructured, new curricular standards need to be developed, and new achievement measurements have to be created.

Second, the status of English in the Arab countries is changing. It starts to gain more space and time in the educational field as well as in the public life. Consequently, it is questionable to continue labeling English as a foreign language in some Arab countries. Students start to study English at the age of six in many Arab countries, whereas in the past they used to begin at the age of twelve. English is the medium of instructions in many private elementary and secondary schools as well as various majors at universities and colleges. Thus, it is mandatory to restructure the EFL curriculum, enrich and modify the current classroom teaching practices, change the artificial language learning environment, and raise EFL standards at schools. Schools need to help students to master the language as well as the communication skills needed in order to compete in the job market of an information society. The Internet could be one of the most effective assets that can be used to help schools to achieve these new goals. However, it might be easy to lead the horse to the river, but could be very hard to force it to drink. Therefore, connecting schools to the Internet could be easy, but compelling or even convincing teachers to use it might be difficult. Thus, it is important to make sure that teachers have positive attitudes towards using the Internet in EFL teaching. For this reason, the current study investigates this issue in order to find answers to the questions mentioned earlier. It is hoped that the study would add up to the building of a ground theory based on raising consciousness of teachers, policy makers, and school administrations to the importance of using the Internet technology in today's schools.

### **3. Terms and definitions**

**Familiarity** refers to the individual's knowledge and/or experience with something that enables him/her to feel relaxed and comfortable when being confronted or asked to work with that particular thing.

**Concerns** refer to "the questions with more or less emotional undertone which signal insecurity and possible resistance against new situations and/or changes and which, one way or another, will have to be solved by the teachers." (Berg & Vendenberghe, 1995, cited in Jongmans et al. 1998, p. 467)

## **4. Literature review**

### **4.1 The Internet and its applications**

It is beyond the scope of this study to give a comprehensive account of the Internet, all its possible applications, its potential benefits, and the teaching possibilities it offers to FL teaching. That is because the Internet is a dynamic entity that changes almost every hour. New web sites are added and old ones are modified or replaced all the time. It is an amazing source of information. One can easily access many sites and get tons of information, contact experts, seek advice, watch films, listen to radios, and so on. It has become a useful tool for many people in various fields and has a strong effect on all aspects of the public life: publishing, buying, selling, teaching, advertising, etc. (Graus, 1999; Warschauer, 2000).

The Internet also becomes an influential tool in FL education. Many teachers all over the world have been experimenting with the Internet for years. They share ideas with other fellow teachers very far from them, set up students mail exchanges (Hennigan, 1999; Nagel, 1999), obtain authentic language materials (LeLoup & Ponterio, 1997), etc. The Internet has various applications which can be very useful for EFL teaching especially in situations where there is a scarcity of teaching resources and where the teaching practices are confined to traditional and artificial styles. The following is a brief and rather representative discussion of some important Internet applications that can be useful in EFL teaching.

Electronic mail, usually shortened as 'email', is one of the useful, simple, and widespread Internet applications. Teacher researchers have started experimenting with email and have found it very rewarding, (Knight, 1994; LeLoup, 1997; Nagel, 1999; Hennigan, 1999). Through email exchanges, FL students can interact with other FL users from other parts of the world. The simplicity of its use helps students to overcome their intimidation and shyness. Being behind the screen, FL students will not be vulnerable to embarrassment or criticism. In addition, researchers such as Kroonenberg (1994/95) found that email allows students not only to express their ideas freely but also show how their ideas flow. Email studies have found that using email in FL classrooms improves students' grammar, lexicon, academic writing (Kern, 1995; Nagel, 1999), and reading abilities (Davis and Chang, 1994/95).

Electronic lists, refers to as “LISTSERVs” and electronic journals are other useful Internet applications. Using LISERVs, interest groups can contact each other, share ideas, discuss problems, engage in professional discussions, and share resources. Electronic journals, on the other hand, allow users to get access to several free and refereed electronic journals. These applications are very useful especially for those teachers who go through what can be called “a drying process”. Many teachers in remote or poor areas are cut off from EFL related resources that would enrich their experiences and enhance their professional development. Therefore, day by day they adhere to certain teaching rituals that could be practically ineffective and theoretically barren. Integrating the Internet in the school curriculum could allow teachers to access hundreds of lists of interest groups for language EFL teachers or subscribe to free electronic journals and consequently allow them to find classroom partners for email exchanges, enhance their teaching career, and get answers to their various questions.

The World Wide Web (WWW) is another powerful, attractive, and flexible Internet application very popular among users. Thousands of sites around the globe can be searched by point and click. The multimedia nature of the Web can present text, graphs, pictures, sounds, video clips, etc. One great feature of the WWW is that it allows users to move between home pages and locations back and forth easily. Moreover, the hypertext link allows documents to contain pointers to other home pages or documents on other locations and users can move between various resources by a click of the mouse (LeLoup & Ponterio, 1997; Poyatos-Matas & Birch, 2000; Graus, 1999).

#### **4.2 A brief history of the Internet in the Arab countries**

The history of the Internet in the Arab countries can be characterized by desires and constraints. There is a great desire driven by economic motives to be part of the IT society. This entails importing and using modern information technology and spreading it all over the Arab countries. Yet, this desire is chained by political, social, cultural and religious constrains. Therefore, some Arab countries continued to resist introducing the Internet for the publics until 1998 (The Estimate 1998). These constraints seem to be overpowered by the public desire and pressure to join the rest of world. However, there are still some Arab countries that have not joined the Internet community or still exercise some sort of control over the use of the Internet via telecommunication monopoly, lack of good communication

infrastructure, or political censorship (McGrew-Zoubi, et. al. 2003; HRW World Report 1999).

The Internet was first introduced into very few Arab countries in the 90s and at a very low rate. United Arab Emirates, Egypt, and Kuwait were among the first Arab countries to have Internet services available for public through local Internet Service Providers (ISPs). The establishment of local (ISPs), the development of Arabic language web browsers and computer software, and the increase of consumer demands have helped the Internet growth in the region. Thus, the number of hosts identified by country identifiers in the Arab countries increased from 2797 in January of 1996 to 11209 in July of 1997 (Network Wizards). The growth is steady but at a low rate in some countries and at high rate in others. The following table shows the growth of the Internet in the Gulf area between 2000 and 2004.

Arab Countries in Middles East	Population (2004 Est.)	Usage, Dec/2000	Internet Usage, Latest Data	Use Growth (2000-2004)	Penetration (% Population)	(%) of Users
<b>Bahrain</b>	699,400	40,000	165,000	312.5 %	23.6 %	1.1 %
<b>Kuwait</b>	2,044,500	150,000	250,000	66.7 %	12.2 %	1.7 %
<b>Oman</b>	3,234,500	90,000	180,000	100.0 %	5.6 %	1.2 %
<b>Qatar</b>	649,600	30,000	70,500	133.3 %	10.8 %	0.5 %
<b>Saudi Arabia</b>	23,337,700	200,000	1,418,900	609.5 %	6.1 %	9.8 %
<b>UAE</b>	3,341,900	735,000	1,175,600	59.9 %	35.2 %	8.1 %

Source: The Internet World Stats at: [www.InternetWorldStats.com](http://www.InternetWorldStats.com)

#### 4.3 The place of the Internet in schools in the Arab countries

The old Arabic saying, “teach your children for a day that will be different from yours”, is not put into practice in today's schools in many Arab countries. Many such schools are not preparing learners to face the challenges of today's and tomorrow's society that is characterized by globalization and information technology. Schools in the Arab countries need to abandon the traditional and artificial classroom practices in order to face such challenges. One way to do so is to introduce into schools those tools that are in actual use in the society and shape its future. The Internet is one of the most prevailing tools and it is used almost for all purposes and across all fields: education, tourism, business, travel, etc.

Unfortunately, only very few researchers attempt to investigate the effect of using technology on teaching at public schools in the Arab countries (AL-Turky, 1993, AL-Sultan &, no date). The integration of the Internet in schools in the Arab countries, its effects on students' achievement, the reaction of parents, teachers, and students to this integration are not thoroughly investigated. However, the use of the Internet in schools in the Arab countries is very much affected by the general constrains mentioned above that limit the access to this technology. Thus, it would be very surprising to find out that a leading country in the IT such as the UAE started to introduce the Internet into schools in the year 2000 (AL-Bayan, 2000). Yet, it was only a pilot project at a very limited number of schools. A revolution needs to occur in the schools of many Arab countries, if they want really to be part of the IT community.

#### **4.4 English Language and the classroom environment**

EFL classrooms, in most Arab countries, are teacher-dominated. Students get fewer opportunities to use the language and express themselves in genuine and meaningful conversations. Thus, learners leave their schools unable to communicate in English after being exposed to it for several years (Gahin & Myhill, 2001; Guefrachi & Troudi, 1999; Rababah, 2003). Not only that, but they face tremendous difficulties during their higher education where English is the medium of instruction. Teachers, parents, and students express their dissatisfaction with such outcomes. The reasons behind this include but not limited to the social and political situations of English language in those countries, the artificiality of the learning environment, and the scarcity of language resources.

For the past few decades, English has been looked at by many people in the Arab World as the language of colonization. Therefore, it continues to be a foreign language imposed on the national curriculum but not used in public life. Nowadays, English is gaining more space in people's life. It is being taught in schools at an early age in many Arab countries such as Kuwait, UAE, Oman, etc. Even in countries like Saudi Arabia where there is a strong resistance to start teaching English at elementary school level, the country has started to implement this plan gradually. It is also being taught in government and private language institutes, schools, and universities. Moreover, it is the medium of instruction in many majors at many higher Arab educational institutions. Thus, EFL teachers and those concerned, instead of thinking about the old question related to the value of investing human resources,

time, and money on teaching and learning a FL that is not used in their life, they have started to think about effective ways and methods that would help schools and teachers to achieve desirable FL outcomes. For instance, under the umbrella of the UAE Ministry of Education and Youth, ELT professionals hold several approach seminars, workshops, and conferences every year in order to promote teachers' performance and achieve outstanding outcomes. Teachers, students, education policy makers, and the society at large are aware of the dilemma of school unsatisfactory outcomes and, thus, have started to find alternative solutions in order to enhance the teaching and learning of English. Using the Internet, among many other alternatives, could be a valuable asset in teaching English and achieving the desirable outcomes.

#### **4.5 Why using the Internet in EFL classroom?**

Several Researchers such as Gonzalez-Bueno (1998), Graus (1999), and Chafe (1999) have extensively discussed the reasons behind using the Internet in the FL classroom. Among these reasons is the fact that the human society is becoming an information society and the role of school is to equip students with the necessary skills that enable them to function properly in the 21<sup>st</sup> century and keep up with the changes and challenges that are taking place outside the walls of school. However, one can argue that students can obtain these skills through other computer and communication courses and not necessary through the use of the Internet in the EFL classroom. That could be true, but one can not ignore that English is the lingua franca of the Internet. Using the Internet in EFL classroom, thus, becomes mandatory because teachers could hit more than one bird with one stone. They will provide their students with first hand learning experiences, provide them with enjoyable exploration of language, create a sense of relevancy for learning English, increase students' motivation, link abstract teaching that takes place in the teacher-fronted classrooms with the outside world, and at the same time help them acquire essential technological skills (Assche, 1998; Graus, 1999). In this way, the Internet could give EFL learning in class a real boost, meaning, and relevance.

It is commonly known that students start leaning English with great enthusiasm and motivation. But their enthusiasm and motivation fade away very soon. That is, probably, because they see no immediate reasons that would make them continue to invest more time and effort on studying a language realizing that they will not use it in their daily life. Using the Internet in the EFL classroom can provide learners with opportunities to interact with the



outside world, access authentic materials, feel the importance and relevance of English language in their life. The various Internet applications such as e-mail, Internet Relay Chat, Newsgroups, Mailing List, etc. are excellent vehicles for communicating and exchanging ideas with native and non-native speakers, (LeLoup, 1997; Graus, 1999).

Another important reason is that students are becoming visually oriented learners. They enjoy animations, videos, sounds, etc. Textbooks, no matter how colorful and attractive they might be, would no longer satisfy students' interests by themselves. The Internet, with all its animation features, has the ability to satisfy students' needs and attract their attention, (Graus, 1999; Frizler, 1995). In addition, the Internet would enable schools to equip students with effective self-learning skills and strategies so as to make them lifelong learners.

In addition to the above general reasons, using the Internet in teaching FL/SL also has several language-learning related benefits. Several FL/SL researchers have studied these benefits (Kelm, 1992; Kern, 1995; Warschauer, 1996, 1997; Sullivan & Pratt, 1996; Chafe, 1999; Poyatos-Matas & Birch, 2000). They have found that students' participation is higher in using modern technology than in face-to-face conversation. According to a study by Ortega (1997), in which she reported the research findings of several studies on computer-assisted classroom discussion, using modern technology (i.e. computers) increases learners' productivity in terms of language and ideas. Learners produce more complex language when using computers than in face-to-face discussion. That could possibly be due to the fact that there is no immediate pressure on the learner when interacting through a machine as opposed to face-to-face interaction. Moreover, less fluent students, as pointed by (Beauvois, 1992; Kelm, 1992), turn to do better when using the computer than during face-to-face interaction. Researchers such as (Kern, 1995; Sullivan and Platt, 1996; Warschauer, 1996; Sotillo, 2000) agree that using computer results in equal participation in which the teacher's domination is minimized. In spite of these findings, rigorous research still needs to be conducted in order to substantiate such findings and document the interpsychological and intrapsychological processes students go through when interacting with others over the Internet (Ortega, 1997).

#### **4.6 Teachers' concerns**

Teachers' concerns and apprehensions might constitute serious challenges that could deter teachers from using the Internet in the FL classroom. Some of these concerns have been

partially addressed by some researchers such as (Kern, 1995; Singhal, 1997; Chafe, 1999; Graus, 1999; Chen, 1996; Kataoka, 2000).

Despite the fact that the Internet is an attractive and rich source of information, it is also chaotic, disorganized, and overwhelming. These negative features make the Internet navigation, especially for novice Internet users, a frustrating and fruitless exercise that wastes their precious time (Graus, 1999, Chafe, 1999). Novice Internet teacher-users find it hard to search the Internet for materials that effectively serve the FL curriculum objectives. Therefore, training is very crucial for teachers in order to guarantee satisfaction and avoid or, at least reduce, frustration.

Culturally inappropriate sites, pornography and plagiarism are among the serious challenges facing using the Internet in schools and in EFL classrooms. With the absence of satisfactory censorship, it is very hard for teachers to monitor their students' work or the sites they visit. Using certain software programs, ISPs and those concerns with using the Internet in schools can exercise some kind of monitoring and control to overcome such problems (Chafe, 1999; Singhal, 1997; Graus, 1999). Yet, this is not 100% satisfactory because new sites are created every hour and everyday.

The Internet could aid fluency at the expense of accuracy (Chafe, 1999; Kern 1995). FL learners will be exposed to a specific Internet language register full of inaccuracies and is different from the academic register. This could be one of the teachers' major concerns. Students read a lot of their peers' output with many mistakes in grammar, spelling, and pronunciation. Being exposed to a lot of inaccurate input might negatively affect their FL learning.

Introducing the Internet into schools would add additional financial burden on the school budget. Technology is changing rapidly and schools need to update their equipment periodically. Teachers need constant technical support and training in order to update their skills. All these require financial support. This could constitute a serious obstacle in using technology in schools and could in one way or another impose some restrictions on the teachers' use of the Internet in schools. Yet, "to be or not to be" is the real challenge for many schools. They have to be part of the society and, therefore, provide the society with

individuals who can function in an information society or not to be part of the society and, consequently, have no real role to play.

## **5. The Study**

The purpose of the study, as pointed out earlier, was to find answers to the following questions.

1. To what extent are UAE secondary school English language teachers familiar with the Internet?
2. What is the status of using the Internet in EFL teaching?
3. Are UAE secondary school English language teachers aware of the benefits of using the Internet in EFL classrooms?
4. To what extent are they willing to use the Internet in EFL classrooms?
5. What are the concerns that they might have regarding using the Internet in EFL classrooms?

### **5.1 The Instrument**

In order to answer the above questions, a four-point scale questionnaire containing 47 items was designed and administered in 42 UAE secondary schools (21 female schools and 21 male schools) in Abu Dhabi, AL-Ain, Dubai, AL-Sharja, Ajman, AL-Foujairah, and Ras AL-Khaima. 250 copies were sent to those schools at the beginning of the year 2003 via the Department of Information, Statistics and Institutional Research at the Ministry of Education and Youth. EFL teachers were asked to tick 'yes' or 'no' for the first 8 items and mark their responses on a four-point Likert scale "strongly agree, agree, disagree, or strongly disagree" for the rest 39 items (9-47). The questionnaire contained four main clusters: the first cluster items (1-8), the second cluster (items 9-24), the third cluster (items 25-28), and the final cluster (items 29-47).

A first draft of the questionnaire was designed based on reading the relevant literature and on a field visit to some secondary school headmasters and EFL teachers. Then, it was piloted on 48 EFL teachers (males and females). Based on the data analysis, a second draft was designed and given to 3 TEFL professionals to check its reliability and readability. Taking into

consideration their comments and feedback, a final draft was created and 250 copies of the questionnaire in English were sent to the Department of Information, Statistics and Institutional Research with an Arabic translation version.

## 5.2 Subjects

The subjects of the study were the EFL teachers at 42 UAE secondary schools (21 male schools and 21 female schools). Schools were randomly selected and the teachers at those schools were invited to fill out the questionnaire. The subjects varied in their teaching experiences. About 77.16% of the subjects had more than ten years teaching experience, 4.3% of them had less than six years teaching experience, the rest had between 6 to 10 years teaching experience. 191 copies of the questionnaire were returned, a return rate of 73.2% (see table 1).

City	No. of returned questionnaire		Total
	Male teachers	Female teachers	
Abu Dhabi	19	22	41
AL-Ain	13	16	29
Dubai	23	20	43
AL-Sharja	18	11	29
Ajman	8	4	12
AL-Fojairah	11	6	17
Ras AL-Khaima	9	11	20
<b>Total</b>	<b>101</b>	<b>90</b>	<b>191</b>

Table 1: Number of Returned Questionnaires

## 6. Results and findings

A t-test was carried out in order to analyze the participants' responses. The results are reported below in numbers, percentages and means. They are also grouped under four main clusters some of which are subdivided into sub-clusters. The following is a discussion of those clusters and sub-clusters.

### 6.1 Familiarity, availability and Internet use

The first cluster (items 1-8) is related to the teachers' familiarity with computers and the Internet and the availability of computer labs and Internet access at secondary schools.

Teachers were asked to respond with 'yes' or 'no' to each item. The responses were calculated and quantified using a t-test, as mentioned earlier. The results of this cluster are reported below in numbers and percentages.

### 6.1.1 Teachers' familiarity with Computer and the Internet

The responses of the participants (table 2 below) confirm that the majority of the teachers (87.45%) are familiar with computer and the Internet. 92.7% of the respondents indicate that they have personal computers and 82.2% use the Internet at home.

Item	Yes Freq.	%	No Freq.	%	Missing value	%
1	177	92.7	14	7.3	0	0
2	157	82.2	34	17.8	0	0
<b>Total Score</b>		<b>87.45</b>		<b>12.55</b>		

Table 2: Teachers' Familiarity with Computers and the Internet

### 6.1.2 Availability of computer labs and the Internet at schools

Items 3-5 deal with the availability of computers and computer labs, and the Internet access at school, respectively. The analysis of the teachers' responses shows that 63.9% of the teachers indicate that computers, computer labs and Internet access are available at UAE secondary schools. The statistics also indicate that a good number of schools (35.9%) do not have computer or Internet facilities.

Item	Yes Freq.	%	No Freq.	%	Missing value	%
3	106	55.5	85	44.5	0	00
4	151	79.1	39	20.4	1	0.5
5	108	57.1	81	42.9	2	1.0
<b>Total Score</b>		<b>63.9</b>		<b>35.9</b>		<b>0.5</b>

Table 3: The Availability of Computers and Internet at Schools

### 6.1.3 Using the Internet for EFL teaching purposes

The participants' responses to items 6-8 are related to the current use of the Internet in EFL teaching. The majority of the respondents (79.23%) confirm that teachers and students neither have access to the Internet at schools nor use it in EFL teaching (see table4).

Item	Yes Freq.	%	No Freq.	%	Missing value	%
6	47	24.6	140	73.3	4	2.1
7	37	19.4	150	78.5	4	2.1
8	21	11.0	164	85.9	6	3.1
<b>Total Score</b>		<b>18.33</b>		<b>79.23</b>		<b>2.43</b>

Table 4: Using the Internet in EFL Teaching

## 6.2 The benefits of using the Internet in EFL classrooms

The second cluster (items 9-24) is subdivided into two sub-clusters: one related to the teachers' awareness of the benefits of the Internet for teachers (items 9-15) and the other one related to the teachers' awareness of the benefits of the Internet for students (items 16-24). To quantify the participants' responses, a t-test also was used and the mean of each item in each cluster was calculated. The mean would have a statistical significance if it is 2.5 or above.

### 6.2.1 The Benefits of the Internet for Teachers

The participants' responses to the items of this cluster remarkably show the highest statistical mean (3.22). This indicates that the majority of the respondents are aware of the benefits of the Internet for teachers. Table (5) shows that items 14 and 15 obtain the highest means (3.37 and 3.35 respectively) among all the items of the questionnaires.

Item	No.		Mean	Std. Dev.
	Valid	Missing		
9	191	0	3.20	.66
10	189	2	3.22	.63
11	191	0	2.96	.71
12	189	2	3.20	.67
13	191	0	3.24	.63
14	190	1	3.37	.66
15	190	1	3.35	.63
<b>Total Score</b>			<b>3.22</b>	<b>.66</b>

Table 5: The Benefits of the Internet for teachers

### 6.2.2 The Benefits of the Internet for Students

Compared to the teachers' awareness of the Internet for teachers (table 5 above), this sub-cluster obtains less statistical mean (2.95). Yet, this mean still indicates that the majority of the respondents are aware of the benefits of the Internet for students. Only item 16, "Using the Internet in teaching English will benefit all the students", obtains the lowest mean (2.65) among all the items of this sub-cluster (see table 6).

Item	No.		Mean	Std. Dev.
	Valid	Missing		
16	190	1	2.65	.70
17	189	2	3.04	.56
18	191	0	2.97	.71
19	191	0	2.96	.69
20	190	1	2.99	.65
21	191	0	3.14	.66
22	189	2	3.03	.64
23	190	1	2.71	.71
24	191	0	3.03	.71
<b>Total Score</b>			<b>2.95</b>	<b>.67</b>

Table 6: The Benefits of the Internet for Students

### 6.3 EFL teachers' willingness to incorporate the Internet in their teaching

The third cluster (items 25-28 table 7) seeks information related to the teachers' willingness to use the Internet in their teaching. It obtains a high statistical mean (2.98) which indicates that the majority of the respondents are willing to incorporate the Internet in their classroom practices. The analysis shows that item 28, "Many English language teachers will integrate the Internet in teaching English if the current syllabus is changed", obtains the highest mean (3.02) in this cluster. This indicates that teachers favor restructuring the current syllabus to guarantee effective incorporation of the Internet in the EFL classroom.

Item	No.		Mean	Std. Dev.
	Valid	Missing		
25	191	0	2.95	.71
26	189	2	2.98	.61
27	191	0	2.95	.64

28	190	1	3.02	.62
<b>Total Score</b>			<b>2.98</b>	<b>.66</b>

Table 7: Teachers' Willingness to Integrate the Internet in their Teaching

#### 6.4 Teachers' concerns

The final cluster is subdivided into five sub-clusters: students-related concerns (items 29-33), teacher-role-related concerns (items 34-37), administration-related concerns (items 38-40), training-related concerns (items 41-44), and cultural-related concerns (items 45-47). The mean of this section (2.79) shows that the majority of the teachers seem to have serious concerns about using the Internet in FL teaching. The following is a discussion of the results of this cluster.

##### 6.4.1 Student-related concerns

Student-related concerns are negative concerns that teachers would judge to be serious due to allowing students to use the Internet. The statistical mean (2.72, table 8) shows that the respondents appear to be concerned about students using the Internet in EFL classroom. However, item 30, which is related to students' losing the spirit of human relationship due to the use of the Internet in FL classroom, gets the lowest mean (2.51). Also a small majority of the respondents believe that students will ignore their books (item 31). On the other hand, the majority of the teachers believe that students will focus on the fun aspect of the Internet and not on learning (item 32).

Item	No.		Mean	Std. Dev.
	Valid	Missing		
29	191	0	2.77	.66
30	188	3	2.51	.76
31	190	1	2.65	.75
32	188	3	2.97	.75
33	188	3	2.69	.74
<b>Total Score</b>			<b>2.72</b>	<b>.73</b>

Tale 8: Student-related Concerns



### 6.4.2 Teacher-role-related concerns

Teacher-role-related concerns are concerns that would stem due to teachers' fear of losing their jobs, inability to control students, or the feeling of being less important compared to classroom where the teacher is the main source of information. The statistics (table 9) show that the majority of the teachers seem not to believe that integrating the Internet in EFL teaching will negatively affect their role in the classroom or their future career. This cluster obtains the lowest and insignificant statistical mean (2.16) among all clusters.

Item	No.		Mean	Std. Dev.
	Valid	Missing		
34	191	0	2.18	.70
35	190	1	2.23	.80
36	191	0	2.20	.74
37	191	0	2.04	.73
<b>Total Score</b>			<b>2.16</b>	<b>.74</b>

Table 9: Teacher-Role-Related Concerns

### 6.4.3 Administration-related concerns

Administration-related concerns are concerns that could emerge as a result of administration rules, regulations, or restrictions that could affect using the Internet in the classroom. The statistics in table (10) show that the majority of the teachers (2.77) seem to believe that the school administration would restrict the use of the Internet at school. This could be done in order to avoid students' misuse (item 39) of the Internet and/or minimize the cost (item 40). However, item 38 obtains the lowest and insignificant mean (2.19) which indicates that most of the respondents seem not to agree that "the school administration will restrict using the Internet freely because teachers will misuse it".

Item	No.		Mean	Std. Dev.
	Valid	Missing		
38	190	1	2.19	.83
39	191	0	3.12	.72
40	191	0	3.01	.84
<b>Total Score</b>			<b>2.77</b>	<b>.66</b>

Table 10: Administration -Related Concerns

#### 6.4.4 Training-related concerns

Training-related concerns are concerns that could emerge due to the need for training in computer and Internet searching skills. The statistics of this cluster (see table 11) indicate that the majority of the respondents (3.13) believe that they need training in computer and Internet searching skills. Training seems to be the teachers' primary need. It obtains the second highest mean among all other clusters and sub-clusters.

Item	No.		Mean	Std. Dev.
	Valid	Missing		
41	191	0	3.15	.73
42	191	0	3.21	.70
43	191	0	3.07	.72
44	190	1	3.07	.72
<b>Total Score</b>			<b>3.13</b>	<b>.72</b>

Table 11: Training-Related Concerns

#### 6.4.5 Culture-Related Concerns

Culture-related concerns are concerns that teachers could have due to the culturally inappropriate materials projected on the Internet. Teachers were asked if they would be reluctant to use the Internet because of the inappropriate materials shown on the Internet or due to the concerns of the students' parents. Only a very small majority of the respondents (2.58) indicates that they will be reluctant to use the Internet due to the reasons above. It seems that most of the respondents are either not strongly aware of the seriousness of some of the materials projected on the Internet or that they are not very much concern because they assume that the students would use the Internet under their direct supervision.

Item	No.		Mean	Std. Dev.
	Valid	Missing		
45	191	0	2.65	.81
46	191	0	2.48	.72
47	191	0	2.60	.75
<b>Total Score</b>			<b>2.58</b>	<b>.76</b>

Table 12: Culture-Related Concerns

## 7. Results Discussion

The first question of the study is related to the familiarity of UAE secondary school English language teachers with computer and the Internet. The answer to this question was gathered by asking teachers if they had computers and Internet services at home and at school. It is not surprising to find out that the majority of the teachers are familiar with computers and the Internet. 92.7% of the teachers have personal computers, 82.2% have Internet access at home, and 63.9% have computers at school. Even though 57.1% of the respondents indicate that their schools have access to the Internet (item 5, table 3), only 18.33% indicate that they use the Internet in EFL teaching (table 4). Apparently, some schools are hooked to the Internet for administrative purposes and not for curriculum or teaching related reasons. Moreover, when some teachers were asked during informal interviews about using the Internet in teaching English, it was found that such use was limited to individual and unplanned personal efforts. This low percentage of Internet use in schools is consistent with the general controlling trend that characterizes many Arab countries, (The Estimate 1998 HRW World Report 1999). This finding should be very alarming to policy makers, school administration, and teachers if they all want to provide the society with skillful and fully equipped individuals who can fit in today's world. Thus, restructuring schools and school curriculum seem very essential so that schools can fulfill their responsibilities towards the society.

The second question addresses the teachers' awareness of the benefits of using the Internet in their EFL classrooms. The analysis of the teachers' responses shows that many teachers believe that the Internet could be a real asset for teachers and students. The highest statistical mean (3.22), shown in table (5), indicates that many respondents believe that the Internet could improve the FL teachers' performance and research skills (see items 9 and 13). Moreover, using the Internet allows teachers to access authentic material, overcome the current challenges of the teaching environment, contact other teachers from different parts of the world, follow recent developments in language teaching, and get access to resources that satisfy their needs (items 10, 11, 12, 14, 15 respectively). On the other side, many teachers seem to acknowledge the benefits of the Internet for students as well. They believe that the Internet helps to prepare students for the information society (item 17), increase students' motivation (item 18), engage students in meaningful use of the language (item 19), get access to useful and authentic materials (items 20, and 22), interact with other English speakers all

over the globe (item 21), and develop self-learning skills (item 24). Since teachers show such a positive attitude towards using the Internet in teaching EFL, it would be assumed that any decision regarding the integration of the Internet in the school curriculum will be welcomed by the majority of the teachers.

The third question of the study is related to the teachers' willingness to use the Internet in EFL classrooms. The statistics show that most teachers are willing to integrate the Internet in their teaching and would allow their students to use it. However, when looking at item 28 in particular (table 7), the majority of the teachers indicate that the current syllabus ought to be changed in order to guarantee an effective integration of the Internet in EFL classrooms. This finding is consistent with the various calls for restructuring not only the EFL curriculum but the schools curriculum as a whole.

The fourth question addresses the teachers' concerns that could emerge as a result of the integration of the Internet in the EFL curriculum. When examining the overall responses of the teachers and in spite of the fact that the majority of the teachers show a positive attitude towards the Internet and show willingness to use the Internet in EFL classroom, the statistical analysis shows that the majority of the teachers show some negative concerns regarding using the Internet in EFL teaching. Some of these concerns could constitute real impediments in the way of using the Internet in EFL classroom if they are not properly addressed. The following is a brief discussion of these concerns.

The statistics shown in table (8) indicate that most of the respondents have serious concerns which could deter them from integrating the Internet in EFL teaching or allowing their students to use the Internet. The teachers' concerns stem out of fear that students might use of the Internet irresponsibly (item 29), ignore their books (item 31), focus on the fun aspect of the Internet and not on learning (item 32), and/or rely on the Internet and will not be independent (item 33). However, these are natural and global concerns (Chafe, 1999; Gaurs, 1999; Kataoka 2000). EFL teachers could overcome such concerns, first and foremost, by being aware of them and then by planning, supervising, and setting ultimate goals behind such Internet experience. Only a very small majority believes that students will lose the human spirit due to the use of the Internet (item 30) whereas, a high majority of the respondents believes that students might focus on the fun aspect of the Internet and do not actually learn.

It was interesting to find out that the majority of the teachers are not concerned about the possibility of losing their traditional role or their jobs, or the inability to control students due to the integration of the internet in EFL classroom. This sub-cluster obtains the lowest statistical mean (2.16) (table 9) which might indicate that many teachers believe that they could assume new roles in an IT classroom.

The analysis shows that many teachers think that school administration would impose certain restrictions on using the Internet in teaching (table 10). The essence of such restrictions could be the fear of misusing the Internet by the students (item 40) or the financial obligations (item 41) that the school administration will have to meet at the end of each month. It is a fact that many schools in the Arab countries operate with very limited budgets. Thus, the introduction of the Internet in those schools will add more financial obligations. This requires school administration to find financial support through governmental or public sectors in order to meet the demands of the new millennium.

The majority of the respondents express the need for training in computer and Internet searching skills (items 41-44). The need for training seems to be very crucial. It obtains the second highest statistical mean among all the clusters and sub-clusters (see table, 11). Teachers feel that they need training so that they can search the Internet for relevant materials that serve the curriculum objectives without wasting their precious time (items 41, 42). Moreover, they need training in evaluating the usefulness of Internet language learning related sites. Taking into account the multiplicity of the Internet sites, teachers need to have certain strategies and guidelines that would help them to make critical and important decisions during Internet search. In order to sustain the teachers' willingness and enthusiasm in using the Internet, they need to be constantly trained so that they will have fruitful experiences in using the Internet.

In spite of the seriousness of the culturally inappropriate materials projected on the Internet which is a major concern for parents and teachers all over the world, the results show that the respondents seem not to show a high degree of concerns. The teacher culture-related concerns obtain the second lowest statistical value (2.58) among all clusters and sub-clusters (table 12). However, teachers still show a degree of concern related to the sensitiveness and seriousness of the cultural material project on the Internet. One reason behind this low statistical means

could be that teachers believe that they would be able to control the students' use of the Internet in the classroom through direct supervision or through censorship software programs.

## **8. Conclusion and recommendation**

The study addresses the current status of using the Internet in FL teaching in the UAE secondary schools: teachers' familiarity with IT, the availability of the Internet services at schools, the teachers' views of its benefits, and the concerns they might have. Despite the fact that the Internet service is available at about (57.1%) of the UAE secondary schools and many teachers are familiar with IT technology and are willing to integrate the Internet in their EFL teaching for the many benefits it has for teachers and students, the majority of EFL teachers (79.23%) do not use this technology in their teaching. Further research is critically needed to investigate the real reasons behind this issue.

It is worth stressing that many teachers have positive attitudes towards integrating modern technology, the Internet in this case, in EFL teaching. The teachers' enthusiasm needs be utilized and directed not only towards reinforcing the currently EFL environment, but towards transforming it into an environment conducive to language learning. The study shows a gap between the current school situation and the rest of the society in relation to IT. Thus, school reform in the Arab countries becomes mandatory in order to meet the demands of the information society. Schools can no longer ignore the importance and the value of modern technology as a valuable teaching/learning tool (Cummins & Dennis, 1995).

Many teachers, as shown in this survey study and in the literature, too, look at the Internet as a wonderful and a rich resource of information for teachers and students. Yet, "not every educational problem is a nail and the Internet is the hammer" (Chen, 1996). Teachers need to view the Internet not as a wand that seemingly could solve all educational problems but as a motivational, enabling, and empowering tool that could benefit both EFL teachers and students. Therefore, integrating the Internet in schools and in EFL classroom entails careful planning and continuous evaluation in order to achieve relevant curricular objectives. The Internet, as a wonderful source of information, could contribute to the professional development of EFL teachers. That is by providing them with opportunities to access the

latest relevant research and information and interact with other EFL experts from all over the globe.

The Internet will continue to be an available source of educational information. Yet, a lot of work still needs to be done from all sides: software designers and developers, computer programmers, Web designers, researchers, and classroom teachers. The Internet has to be less time consuming, user-friendly, culturally sensitive, and curriculum oriented.

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