

THE INFLUENCE OF COMPUTER ELECTRONIC MAIL (CEM) ON THE
PERFORMANCE AND COMPETENCE OF MIDDLE LEVEL ENGLISH AS A
SECOND LANGUAGE (ESL) STUDENTS IN THE STATE OF KUWAIT

by

Bader Nader Ali AL-Khodari

Dissertation submitted to the Faculty of the

Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University

in partial fulfillment of the requirement for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

in

Teaching and Learning

APPROVED:

Dr. R. Terry Graham, Chairman

Dr. John K. Burton

Dr. Roberta M. Minish

Dr. Muzaffer S. Uysal

Dr. James E. LaPorte

April, 1999

Blacksburg, Virginia

Key Words: CEM, ESL, E-mail, Internet, Kuwait, Computer

Copyright 1999. Bader N. Ali

**THE INFLUENCE OF COMPUTER ELECTRONIC MAIL (CEM) ON THE
PERFORMANCE AND COMPETENCE OF MIDDLE LEVEL ENGLISH AS A
SECOND LANGUAGE (ESL) STUDENTS IN THE STATE OF KUWAIT**

by

Bader Nader Ali

Dr. R. Terry Graham, Chairman

Department of Teaching and Learning/EDCI

(ABSTRACT)

This research was designed to investigate the utility, relevance, and efficacy levels in the application of Computer Electronic Mail (CEM) as a tool for the teaching and learning of English as a second language (ESL). The participants in the study consisted of 26 students (18 females and 8 males) selected from the population of full time middle-level students of English as a Second Language Kuwaiti Students (ESLKS) in Kuwait University (KU).

The Statistical findings of the study indicate that CEM is a useful and effective tool for the study of English as a second language among ESLKS. Positive significant differences were observed comparing pre-CEM and post-CEM scores in sentence structure, syntax, spelling, vocabulary, and the clarity of writing skills. A second dimension of the study was a survey of the participants' opinions and attitudes about CEM. The opinion survey assessed participants' perceptions of the relevance, usefulness, and effectiveness of CEM as a means of communication and as a tool for the learning of the English language. The study involved a pretest, a seven-week training in the use of CEM to communicate with native American English speakers, and a posttest of

participants' performance in five critical language skills. This portion of the study also indicates the participants' overall satisfaction with CEM as useful tool both for developing English language skills, facilitating learning, building self-confidence in contacting and communicating with other people, stimulating interest in the learning of the English language, and helping in homework assignments. Participants also seem to perceive the relevance of CEM not only in the learning of English as a second language, but also in communication and in transmitting information, generating ideas, striking friendships, solving problems, and increasing work output.

BISM-ILLAH-IR-RAHMAN-IR-RAHEEM

In The Name of Allah, The Compassionate, The ALL-Merciful
Greeting of Allah blessings be upon our Prophet Muhammad (Sallahu Alayhi
Waalihhi Wasalam) and upon all the Pure Members of his House

Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated to my great mother for her abiding faith in education and all the sacrifice she made to give me higher education. For her, this dissertation is a dream come true and my way of saying: “Thank you, Mom, your patience, encouragement, support, and prayers for my success in life.”

The dissertation is also dedicated to my beloved wife, Salwa Jawhar, for her love and devotion. She cheers me up when I am down and is always there when I need help. This work is dedicated to her for her exemplary love, patience, support, and continuing prayers.

Acknowledgment

First of all, I would like to give special thanks to ALLAH (Subhanahu Wa Ta'Ala) who has given me patience, health, energy, peace and power to meet the challenges of higher education and to succeed. The Greeting of Allah (Subhanahu Wa Ta'Ala) blessings be upon our Prophet Muhammad (Sallahu Alayhi Waalihi Wasalam) and upon all the Pure Members of his House.

Second, I wish to extend my appreciation to Public Authority for Applied Education and Training (PAAET), Kuwait, and the Kuwaiti College of Basic Education for granting me a scholarship and sponsorship to pursue my higher education.

My appreciation also goes to all members of my dissertation committee who have made this work possible. I am grateful to each and every single one of them for sharing their knowledge and experiences and, also, for their moral support and advice throughout the conception, design implementation of the study, which is reported in this dissertation. I feel extremely fortunate to have worked under the supervision of such a talented and distinguished group of professionals.

First among them is my advisor and dissertation committee chair, Dr. R. Terry Graham. I am extremely indebted to him for his guidance and valuable contributions to my learning experience. His kind-heartedness, friendship, and continuous support are fondly remembered. I am very grateful for his knowledge, availability, optimism, and faith in me. His encouragement, "Bader, I am confident you will do this work," meant a lot to me and really helped me on. Second in the list of committee members is Dr. John K. Burton who was the first person I met in Blacksburg, VA. USA and who has since been an unfailing source of help and assistance. It is he who first introduced me to the

instructional computer technology and the use of Computer Electronic Mail (CEM) technology, during the first class that I took with him. I am truly grateful for his friendship, support, and help in solving so many problems during my study. As he always said: “Bader, don’t worry, you will be OK in your work.” His wisdom, advice, and encouragement are treasured and will be remembered for a long time. Third, I wish to express my indebtedness to Dr. Roberta M. Minish for recognizing the importance of this kind of study to the State of Kuwait and other Arab countries, and especially for her encouragement and guidance. I should like to acknowledge in particular, her open-door policy as well as her support and willingness to help. Fourth, I wish to express my thanks to Dr. Muzaffer S. Uysal for his assistance in organizing the statistical data of this study, and for his help in solving many other related problems. I am grateful for his support, encouragement, and enthusiasm throughout the study. Finally, I wish to gratefully acknowledge Dr. James E. LaPorte’s inspiration, guidance, and advice. His motivation kept my enthusiasm alive and, to a very large extent, have made this work possible. I am particularly indebted to him for his assistance, insightful suggestions, and counsel throughout the research.

I am glad and, indeed, honored to acknowledge so many friends, colleagues, and family members who in various ways have contributed to my higher education and the completion of this work. First, I should like to acknowledge Dr. Humod AL-Muadf, Director, Public Authority for Applied Education and Training (PAAET), Kuwait, for his support, collaboration, and encouragement. I also wish to express my gratitude to my colleagues at the Kuwaiti Public Authority for Applied Education and Training: Mr. Soud Jafar, Mr. Gholoom AL-Atter, Mr. Fahad AL-Kanan, Mr. Ahamd AL-Husaini, Mr.

Yousef BaBa, Khawlah AL-Sumait, and all employees for their assistance and especially for granting me a PAAET scholarship. I also wish to thank Mr. Hussain Merza at PAAET for his assistance with the SPSS statistical package software, data coding, and entry that saved me so much time and effort. My sincere appreciation goes to my colleagues at the Kuwaiti College of Basic Education, Dr. Ahamd AL-Sarheed, Dean of College of Basic Education, Dr. YaGoob Ali, Head of Department of Educational Technology and Mr. Bader Haji for their assistance, motivation, support and willingness to help when I really needed their help. I also wish to acknowledgment the friendship and support of all my colleagues at Department of Educational Technology. I also wish to express my appreciation to my colleagues at the Kuwaiti College of Basic Education, Dr. Ali Askar, Dr. Hassan AL-Mousawi, Dr. Ganem Sultan, Dr. Abdullah AL-Wataid, Dr. Ali AL-NaJadah, Mr. Nabeel AL-Qallaf and all friends at this college. I extend my sincere, deep appreciation, and grateful to two of my colleagues at Kuwait University. First is Dr. Jafer Haji Ali, for permission to use his class for this study. I wish to particularly acknowledge his help, support, and concern. Second is Dr. Yousef AL-Zalzal for his motivation, logistical support, and interest in my work. I also wish to express very deep appreciation to the 26 middle-level students of English as a Second Language - Kuwaiti Students (ESLKS) at Kuwait University, who so willingly and happily served as subjects and participants in this research.

My close friend, cousin, and Member of the Kuwaiti National Assembly (Muj'les Al-Omah), Dr. Hasan Johar, deserve very special gratitude for his continuous support and guidance throughout the course of my education. I wish to particularly acknowledge his kindness not only to me, but to so many other people. His love and friendship to me

personally is deeply appreciated. So also is his encouragement and faith in me. I will never forget his inspirational words: “Bader, you must finish soon; and this will be history that we will never forget.” Other past and present Members of the Kuwaiti National Assembly Assembly (Muj'les Al-Omah), deserve special mention and appreciation. They are: Mr. Ali Ahamd AL-Baghli, Mr. Adnan S. Abdul-Samad, Dr. Naser AL-Sanea, and Mr. Abdulmohsen Y. Jamal. The Ambassador, Cultural Attaché, and my student adviser, Mrs. S. Sahakyan, at the Embassy of Kuwait, Washington, DC, USA, deserve very special acknowledgement for their assistance throughout my studies.

Finally, I wish to acknowledge the love, support, patience, and understanding of my wife, Salwa Jawhar, and our dearest sons Abdulaziz, Abdullah, and Ali. Very special gratitude also goes to my parents for their commitment to education and their inspiration, and my late mother-in-law and father-in-law who were looking forward to the day when they would call me “Dr. Bader.” I should also like to thank my sisters (Samera and Nadia), brothers, brothers-in-law, and sisters-in-law (especially Mrs. Fatimah) for their love, motivation, and support.

A host of friends and colleagues also helped, keeping my enthusiasm alive and emotional support in this work. The list is too long to be acknowledged individually. Even so, I feel I should recognize a few of them. They are: Dr. Donald Mckeon, Dr. Efiog Etuk, Dr. Merza Hasan, Dr. Hamad H. AL-Abdullah, Dr. Ahmad H. Mansour, Mr. Faisal AL-Gareb, Mr. Jawad AL-Matrok, Mr. Khalid AL-Husainan, my cousin Jasem Muhammad, Muhammed Qadiri, Odah AL-Rowaie, Henry Iroegbu, Dr. Clement Iheanacho, Debbie Reese, Bonnie Gilbert, Bonnie Guthrie, Mr. Ed Schwartz, my friends

of “AL-Barnamj AL-Thani Al AL-Kat” at Radio Kuwait, and my friends of AL-Taleea Newspaper.

Thank You

Ws Assalamu Alaikum Wa Rahmatullah Wa Barakatuh

TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER I	1
INTRODUCTION	1
Trends in Foreign Language Teaching and Learning	1
Kuwaiti Educational System and the Learning of English as a Second Language (ESL) in the State	3
Statement of the Problem	7
Research Objective	10
Research Questions	11
Purpose of the Study	12
Significance of the Study	12
Theoretical Basis	13
Definition of Acronyms	15
CHAPTER II	16
LITERATURE REVIEW	16
Introduction	16
Computer-Mediated Communication (CMC)	17
The Internet Phenomenon	25
Internet in the State of Kuwait	29
Computer Electronic Mail (CEM)	30
The Use of Computer Electronic Mail (CEM) in Education	32
CEM and ESL Writing	37

Approaches to Teaching ESL Writing	43
ESL Measurement and Evaluation	47
Qualitative Inquiry	49
Participant Observation	50
Non-Participant Observation	50
Open ended Interview	51
Ethnographic Study	51
Quantitative Research	53
CHAPTER III	55
METHODOLOGY	55
Overview	55
Research Objective and Hypotheses	55
Research Procedure	56
Research Design	57
Research Variables	58
Population and Sample	58
Participating Instructor	58
Location and Setting	59
Equipment (Software and Hardware)	60
Class CEM Procedure	61
ESLKS Training	62
Instruments	64

Methods of Data Collection	65
Problems and Limitation of the Study	66
Permission for the Study	66
Data Analysis	66
Time Line for the Study (1997-1998).....	68
CHAPTER IV	69
RESULTS	69
Overview	69
Demographic Student Information (DSI)	69
English as a Second Language Kuwait Student Information (ESLKSI)	75
Computer Technology Experience (CTE)	80
Tests of Hypotheses	106
Summary of Findings	110
CHAPTER V	111
CONCLUSION	111
Introduction	111
Design Overview	111
Findings	113
Recommendations	115

Future Research Considerations	118
Postscripts	120
REFERENCES	122
APPENDIXES	137
Appendix 1: Pre-Survey	138
Appendix 2 Post-Survey	145
Appendix 3: Permission for the Study	151
Appendix 4: General Goals of Teaching the English Language in the State of Kuwait	158
VITA	160

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1:	Map of Kuwaiti Educational System	6
Figure 2:	An evolutionary definition of electronic mail (CEM)	31
Figure 3:	Participation patterns in traditional and electronic class discussions ...	39
Figure 4:	The frequency of access from foreign countries and regions to ESL Homepage	43
Figure 5:	The research study design	57
Figure 6:	Time line for the study	68