

## TOWARDS UNDERSTANDING NEW DIGITAL-BASED READING PRACTICES IN HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS

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**Abstract:** Printed texts have been the primary sources of reading for a long time. While new technologies have increased, innovative reading practices have been observed to be displayed on electronic devices. University teachers and students often read on the go, which could substantially affect how teachers instruct, and how students learn. The present study aims to investigate the shift from printed-text resources to digital-based reading practices in higher education institutions. This study employed an exploratory, descriptive research design using an online survey. A random sample of EFL teachers (n=20) from the faculty of arts and foreign languages at different Algerian universities participated in the study. The findings reveal that the survey respondents demonstrated their technology dependency whilst reading. The digital literacy competencies and skills teachers moderately prioritize could be classified as basic and critical skills. The research on digital reading contributes to the literature on innovative teaching practices in higher education institutions in Algeria. It is valuable to EFL teachers to modify their teaching practices and pedagogical approaches to promote digital reading and therefore equip students with necessary 21st-century reading skills.

*Keywords:* Digital-based reading practices; EFL teachers; higher education; printed-text resources

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## 1. Introduction

Initiatives have been implemented by the Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research of Algeria to enhance the quality of education in general and endorse the use of English in particular. The central premise is to prioritize the importance of teachers' and learners' digital literacy skills to support instructional improvement, learning outcomes and teachers' professional development. The new policy is to move towards digitalization in education. Teachers are expected to deal with these innovations while adopting new teaching practices, which could be a good opportunity for their ongoing learning. In this regard, teachers are currently required to teach online, utilize digital gadgets and platforms to manage work responsibilities, access a wide range of educational resources, stay updated by following relevant publications on official web pages or social media accounts, participate in digital literacy training programs and attend or participate in online conferences and webinars. They, hence, spend more time on the screen, unlike before where the only resources teachers employed for reading were printed texts. Digital texts, as one of the primary elements in a blended learning approach, have been utilized by many universities (Pardede, 2019). To this end, innovative reading practices have been observed to be displayed on electronic devices in many EFL classes. Equally, university teachers and students often read on the go, which could accordingly render print reading obsolete. Pardede (2019) accentuated that e-books have increasingly replaced printed texts. Teachers, who are now witnessing the shift from print to digital reading (Balling et al., 2019), have grown up with print and developed a good rapport with paper reading. However, students who have grown up with technology devices are considered digital natives (Al-Seghayer, 2023; Balling et al., 2019; Pardede, 2019) and may not be well-versed in print reading. Therefore, moving away from printed-text resources to digital reading and incorporating digital gadgets into teaching practices is essential to cope with this change, even if the use of technology in many EFL settings is still in its developmental phase. Previous research studies on reading digital texts have demonstrated pre-service teachers' positive perceptions of reading digitally (Bozgun & Can, 2022; Madan, 2018; Manula, 2019; Reichenberg & Andreassen, 2018). The knowledge gap the current study aims at filling is the shift from print to digital reading in higher education institutions in Algeria, and how the current situation probably affects teachers' practices within and beyond the classroom setting. The present paper will provide a better understanding of emerging digital reading practices in higher education institutions.

The present study serves to answer the following research questions:

- How is EFL teachers' digital-based reading experience compared to print-based resources?
- How do EFL teachers incorporate digital reading into literacy instruction?
- What are the emerging digital reading practices in EFL classrooms?
- How do EFL teachers perceive the influence of digital devices on reading skills and practices?

## 2. Literature Review

### *2.1 Digital Reading*

Technology has taken an integral part in every single aspect of our daily lives. Assuredly, it becomes evident that almost our daily communication and interactions are all saved and recorded on our devices, namely computers, phones or tablets (Balling et al., 2019). The notion of literacy has utterly changed over time following the worldwide technological development. In today's rapidly evolving world, literacy is defined as having the ability to read, write and using the latest technologies to adapt very easily to the recent transformations and challenges brought about by digital gadgets, indubitably for teachers and students who

strive for professional development and excellence. Accordingly, to be digitally literate, following Azman et al. (2017), one should be mindful of the latest technologies and employ ICTs to find, understand, evaluate, create and communicate digital information using different platforms. These are manifested independently of cognitive and technical capacities as well. Developing new information and communication technologies may offer various facilities and serve different purposes. Certainly, one important influence has been on reading (Balling et al., 2019).

Reading—as an intellectual practice—is of utmost importance in advancing literacy levels, mainly for university students. It is often regarded as a good predictor of their achievements in EFL setting; the level and amount of reading required are critical. Academic reading is commonly defined as the reading completed, performed mainly by students, in an attempt to learn about a specific topic. Printed materials, including newspapers, magazines, and books, are electronically accessed; and the resultants are e-books, e-newspapers, and e-magazines. Digital, online, or screen reading sets out the process of extracting meaning from a text or any other multimedia resources that are exhibited in a digital format (Azman et al., 2017). It includes magazines, articles, books, blogs, emails, websites, text messages, social net and working sites. Likewise, digital reading has been put forward as "an invisible activity", using a smart-phone, tablet, and computer screen and listening to electronic texts in digital audio-books or text-to-speech technologies in our smart-phones (Cardoso et al., 2012; Çeliktürk Sezgin, 2022; Demir, 2023; OECD, 2011).

Of prime importance is the inevitability of obtaining information in a digital or physical environment (Balling et al., 2019; Engberg et al., 2022; Madan, 2018). This takes in written, visual, and auditory touch operated in addition to hyperlinks functions that can be read on the screen and saved in a digital device, accessed from the internet (as a text message or online posting) or kept on screen reading devices. Thereupon, digital reading or physical texts pertains to the ability to read, decipher, write, and produce interactive, linked, multimedia digital texts effectively, characterized by various representations and designs, including decentralization and collaboration. All these essential features have in essence turned the digital reading experience into an attractive activity compared to printed text counterparts (Pardede, 2019). Nevertheless, digital reading is still deemed to be a supplement activity.

The chief concern in the digital transformation of reading practices is that readers should cope with information overflow, demonstrating that particular skills and strategies are to adhere to when engaging in screen reading. The digital reading experience necessitates more advanced and critical reading skills for readers to select what to read, decide on appropriate web pages, evaluate the quality of the information, and link it from different web pages. The central premise that underlies digital reading and makes it very flexible for use is hypertext. The reading processes used whilst reading the print favour those employed in hypertext. The latter consists of text displayed on electronic devices, which links to other texts that can be directly accessed (Nowak, 2008). The texts then consist of hyperlinks and hypermedia elements. A hyperlink—as a digital reference— provides direct access to related sections of text by clicking or tapping, and it is usually underlined or buttoned. Hypermedia is defined as digital texts accessed by hyperlinks; nevertheless, they have multimedia facilities such as audio, video and graphics (Azman et al., 2017).

## *2.2 Digital Reading Practices*

With regards to the emerging digital reading behaviours and practices, as Al-Seghayer (2023) suggested, they may be classified into shallower forms of digital reading, selected digital reading and bouncing reading. In his investigation, he found that the most predominant forms of digital reading in EFL settings are shallower, selective, and bouncing reading

behaviours. Shallower reading behaviours are distinguished from different reading practices that embrace skimming, scanning, browsing and spotting words throughout the digital reading material. Deep reading would not be warranted as readers may spend less time engaged with a digital text. Another form of digital reading is selective reading; it characterizes readers who opt for short digital documents, portions, or parts to locate pertinent information simply. In this form of digital reading, readers do not necessarily exceed two pages. Bouncing reading is typically initiated by a reader's attempts to jump between different sections of text, skip portions of text, move within and between texts, or from page to page and website to website. Be it shallower, selective, or bouncing, the estimated reading time, along with deep or attentive reading, must be questioned during digital reading, possibly rendering careful reading unpractised and comprehension unattainable.

### *2.3 Printed Texts vs. Digital Texts*

Granted that the physical or printed text and the digital text are tailored to serve the same reading intent, i.e., derive meaning from a text. Nonetheless, they take account of different sensory-motor interactions. Reading a paper book allows readers to hold a book in their hands, flip through its pages, feel the weight of the book, experience how the volume of the pages augments along the reading process and probably leave their fingerprints on the pages. That could be as essential and satisfactory as the reading act per se. Reading a digital text may seem different, for readers can interact with the text characterized by swiping right or left, scrolling, and adjusting the text format, wherein they feel softness under their fingertips (Balling et al., 2019). In essence, digital documents provide more facilities for readers than printed texts. Digital texts, according to Eijansantos et al.2020, could be distinguished from traditional formats of reading. The significant divide between traditional paper-based reading/ printed texts and digital texts lies in how texts are produced, displayed and organized. Physical texts are presented in a relatively permanent manner; whereas, digital texts are not static. Their shape, font size and location can be adjusted and updated according to the type of gadget and the readers' needs (Manalu, 2019; OECD, 2011; Pardede, 2019). These variations probably have a considerable bearing on access, comprehension and use in different contexts.

Another difference to account for is the readability and usability of texts. It could be argued that there is no difference between texts displayed online or printed on paper in favour of utilizing the same writing mechanics. The only distinction is about the display size of the page. The information presented on screen is smaller than that in print, which could affect readability. Digital texts allow readers to access and navigate through texts rapidly. Hyperlink helps display a new page with a simple click (Demir, 2023). These benefits can offer a new reading experience. Even if readers have command over the reading process, as they can easily augment the font size, it becomes very challenging to make connections between sections (Manalu, 2019). This may have rendered the comprehension process more challenging.

Maden (2018, p.1) pointed out that digital reading devices are "essential savings in terms of time, space and energy". Teachers and students can easily archive or save books with a digital gadget, and they can view, read and share digital sources. Storing or sharing books alike to print materials that occupy space. Nonetheless, readers' attachment (Balling et al., 2019) to their digital devices, mainly the phone, could be the ultimate source of fear indubitably caused by the potential distraction of App notifications or fear of missing out on information. Granted that digital devices are power-dependent, the reading activity discontinues if the device runs out of power or the reader is in a place where a power outlet is inaccessible. In this view, paper reading underpins deep reading. Moreover, affordability—the ability to purchase electronic devices and internet connection— relates to digital reading

(Abequibel, et al., 2022). However, printed texts are not always free of charge since learners need to buy or print them.

More importantly, reading seems to be a location-specific activity. The physical environment for reading has changed, noticing that teachers and students can read on the go, everywhere and at any time. The question of where we read bears on whether the location preferences for reading would influence the reading process per se (Balling et al., 2019). Digital reading proffers a unique experience if we compare it with its counterpart, printed reading, potentially enhancing social collaboration, participation and mobility. Digital reading transforms the reading practice into a social experience and a network activity whereby teachers or students can freely share their opinions regarding the book they are reading and engage in discussing its content using online network (such as weblogs or wiki), which in all probability may contribute to collaborative writing, and it likewise enhances the reading practices (Cardoso et al., 2012; Engberg et al., 2022; Jeong, 2012; Lim & Toh, 2020).

Owing to the complex nature of reading, print reading is employed for reading longer texts, offers more opportunities for a second reading, pays careful attention whilst reading and raises concentration. Paradede (2019) argued that many previous studies show that printed texts are better than digital texts in terms of speed, accuracy and comprehension. In a blended learning environment, print reading practices have almost been replaced by digital reading, especially in higher education institutions. As a result, learners' preferences in learning are inherently evolving. Students, now regarded as digital natives, have been observed to read extensively on the screen using digital gadgets, particularly mobile phones, and shift away from paper reading. They proved their dedication and addiction to their smart-phones. Teachers' role is to cope with these innovative ways of reading and become undoubtedly aware of emerging reading practices through adjusting their teaching practices and pedagogical approaches. Consequently, they become fully conversant in digital reading, its nature, and its effects on reading engagement and comprehension. Incorporating e-books into EFL literacy instruction (Medjahed, 2023) would positively influence strategy use, indicating that e-books are engaging and valuable reading materials for learners.

#### *2.4 Related Works*

Reichenberg and Andreassen (2018) explored the issue of how Swedish and Norwegian teachers' human capital and social capital support their professional development as measured by reading habits; they found initial differences between the teachers. Young teachers (between 18 and 25 years old) in both countries read more digital texts than old teachers (between 46 and 68 years old), who have been found to read more newspapers, nonfiction and fiction. Madan (2018) found that mobile-assisted reading takes a significant part of the daily routine of pre-service Turkish language teachers. In her research, Manula (2019) concluded that pre-service teachers' perceptions of digital reading were positive. It is to state that digital texts were motivating and interesting and matched their reading styles due to their accessibility, availability and convenience compared to their printed text counterparts. Balling et al. (2019) investigated university students and well-educated library professionals' digital reading behaviours. The specificity of the results indicated that digital reading is associated with both convenience and social conditions that differ across genders and age groups. This proves that women showed more fidelity to print but positive attitudes towards digital gadgets than men who reported using mobile phones and computers as digital reading devices. Middle groups were found to be print media dependent but showed interest in other predominantly digital devices and behaviours as well. The preferred reading gadget and purpose among the youngest is associated with their studies and social condition. The results do show an encouraging shift among the young participants away from print, except for fiction, and a shift among the older towards digital mobile devices. Likewise, Bozgun and Can (2022)

pointed out that pre-service teachers hold positive attitudes towards digital reading, and differences were due to age, gender and grade level. Medjahed's study (2023) unravelled Algerian EFL teachers' positive beliefs regarding e-book incorporation into literacy instruction in tertiary education.

As per the previous studies that have demonstrated teachers', and mainly pre-service, positive attitudes towards digital reading and that age is regarded as a significant variable; it is to conclude that young teachers are more digitally dependent in contrast to old teachers, who are indeed print and digitally-oriented. However, in-service teachers' digital reading experience and practices in Algeria and how they incorporate digital reading into EFL literacy instruction have yet to be thoroughly investigated. The current study includes in-service teachers to answer how university teachers, in particular, understand and perceive digital reading and experience the shift from print to digital reading. Considering that the manners in which texts are presented and produced have changed, they indeed have transformed the way how learners read and, likewise, teachers instruct. For that reason, we do believe, as Pardede(2019) put it, that there should be concordance between age, experience and awareness of digital texts.

### **3. Methodology**

#### *3.1 Context*

This study supports Algeria's recent educational changes that aim to improve the quality of instruction and encourage digital literacy among higher education instructors and students. The incorporation of digital tools into teaching and learning methods has been a major area of concentration, reflecting the global trend towards digitalization. University teachers are under growing pressure to use digital tools and platforms for teaching in the context of EFL. This change promotes the use of digital texts as primary resources while challenging conventional print-based reading habits. The shift is still challenging, though, because many teachers, who are used to reading in print, must modify their methods to accommodate new technology and the preferences of students who are digital natives. Therefore, the study offers a deeper comprehension of new digital reading patterns in universities.

#### *3.2 Participants*

The target population included EFL university teachers. The study was based on a sample of 20 participants (n=20). The participants' age ranges between 34 and 46 (Mean=36.08). They teach at the faculty of arts and foreign languages in different working environments, including Constantine1 (n=11), ENS Constantine (n=2), Béjaïa (n=1), Setif (n=2), Tlemcen (n=1), Laghouat (n=1), Médéa (n=1) and Ourgela (n=1). A simple random sampling technique was utilized. The online survey link was sent out to teachers via email and social media accounts (Facebook and LinkedIn).

#### *3.3 Research Design*

This exploratory, descriptive research employed a quantitative survey design to gain insights into digital reading practices among university teachers in Algeria. The study aims at providing a better understanding of how digital reading is experienced as well as integrated in higher education, particularly in comparison with traditional print reading. It explores how EFL teachers incorporate digital reading into literacy instruction, the nature of emerging digital reading practices in the classroom, and teachers' perceptions of the impact of digital devices on reading skills and practices. The research design was chosen to allow for the collection of broad insights that could inform future pedagogical and institutional decisions related to digital literacy in EFL contexts.

### 3.3 Data Collection Instrument and Procedures

Data were collected at the end of the second semester of the 2023–2024 academic year through an online survey administered via Google Forms. The online survey has been developed from the existing literature related to the present topic, primarily Al-Seghayer, 2023; Balling et al., 2019; OECD, 2019. It includes both qualitative open-ended questions and quantitative close-ended items (including dichotomous questions and multiple-choice questions). The scale was organized thematically, addressing the following areas:

*-Demographics and Institutional Support:* Characteristics of the participants, including age, employment status, work experience, courses taught, educational qualifications, preferences for reading mode, training in ICT use, and institutional support for digital integration (8 items).

*-Screen vs. Print Reading Practices:* Teachers' habits and practices regarding reading modes (4 items).

*-Digital Reading in the EFL Classroom:* Integration of digital devices in EFL teaching (4 items).

*-Impact of Digital Gadgets on Reading Practices:* Perceived influence of digital devices on reading skills, practices and behaviours (4 items).

The survey was pilot tested on 11 EFL teachers at Blida 2 University. The analysis results provided feedback on specific items that were unnecessary and others that required revision before the actual data collection. This process helped us fine-tune the final version of the questionnaire by developing option categories based on open-ended responses, which were later used to create close-ended questions. It also revealed that teachers allow learners to utilize digital devices in the classroom to achieve different academic reading purposes despite the courses they were teaching.

## 4. Results

### 4.1. Background of Participants

Teachers' role is to enhance innovation in education to cope with this digital transformation. The pedagogical use of digital gadgets in the EFL setting was first measured by considering the participants' teaching experience. Regarding the depth of their teaching experience, all the participants (100%) are full-time teachers. Nearly all the teachers 16 (80%) are experienced; they served over ten years as university teachers (between 11-20 years); 3(15%) teachers have a teaching experience of 6 to 9 years, and only 1(5%) teacher is at the beginning of his/her teaching career, with 1-year experience. The vast majority are indeed in-service teachers, and they are well-experienced. Concerning their highest academic qualification, 16 (80%) teachers are PhD holders, while 2(10%) teachers hold Magister's degree and 2(10%) are Professors. From the overall sample size, the courses taught by the teachers, which may assist in determining how reading as mediated by digital devices is practiced, are: Literature and Civilization(n=3), Didactics(n=4), Oral Expression(n=4), Research Methodology(n=3), Study Skills(n=1), Psycho-pedagogy(n=1), Translation(n=1), Written Expression(n=4), Language Acquisition(n=1), Reading and Study of Texts(n=1), Linguistics(n=3), ESP(n=5), Reading(n=1), and Grammar (n=1). It is noteworthy that 1(5%) participant teaches "Reading" in relation to study of texts and only 1(5%) teaches "Reading", as a language skill. As for their reading preferences, 11(55%) teachers prefer both types of reading, digital and print, 7(35%) teachers prefer reading in paper format, while 2(10%) teachers favour reading on digital gadgets.

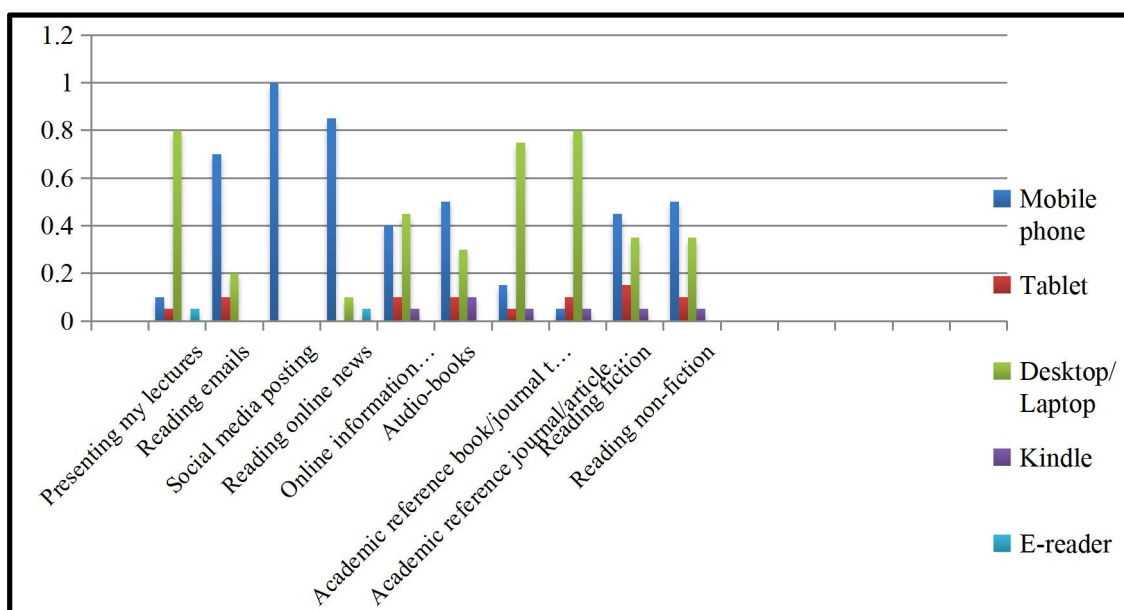
Developing digital competencies and skills is of utmost importance for teachers to efficiently and purposefully use digital gadgets in teaching to be good digital citizens and ensure lifelong learning, which may call for professional training and institutional support. Item 6 shows that the majority (70%) agreed that their institutions support and permit incorporating digital devices into instruction, as they acknowledged their educational value and positive outcomes on learning. To use digital devices in the classroom, teachers should be adequately trained. Of 20 respondents, 65% reported that they had undergone professional training on ICTs because it was mandatory at their university, whereas, 35% had not received formal training. This may perhaps cause concern over their digital competence and practices.

#### 4.2 Screen Reading Time vs. Print Reading Time

Teachers' preparedness to cope with this digital transformation and the 21st century skills could be demonstrated through their practices within and beyond the classroom setting to successfully develop necessary digital competence en route to utilize digital gadgets and platforms to be conversant with the nature of digital reading. 90.9% of respondents, representing the majority, stated that they spend less than 2 hours a day reading print. Regarding their daily screen exposure to achieve different reading purposes, it is pointed out that many respondents (72.7%) spend less than 6 hours on digital devices. The informants' average screen and print reading time is different and could be satisfactory due to their individual preferences, work duties, and health issues.

#### 4.3 Digital Devices Uses

With digital gadgets becoming more advanced in the digital age, it is almost certain that EFL teachers, like students, employ them for different reading purposes. When asked about the frequency of using digital devices, the computer and mobile phones have tended to be the gadgets employed most as reading resources. The mobile is mainly used to read social media posting (100%), online news (85%), emails (70%), non-fiction (50%) and audio-books (50%). The computer is used to present their lectures by the vast majority of respondents (80%), and read academic reference journals for general (80%) or specific information (75%). However, only one participant used the tablet and e-reader. Even if it becomes omnipresent and is rated the best e-reader, two teachers prove their reliance on the Kindle.



**Figure 1.**

*Frequency of Using Digital Devices*

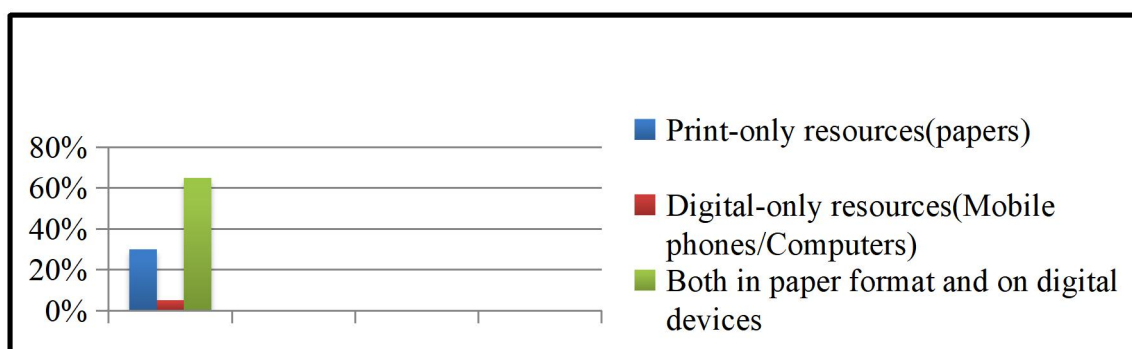


#### 4.4 Evaluating Students' Written Production

The higher education sector in Algeria is in transition at the moment, and the encouraging shift to online teaching and learning necessitates innovative ways and tools for assessment (E.g., evaluating master dissertations and PhD theses digitally). Concerning their digital reading experience, evaluating students' written production on paper seems convenient for 9(45%), and 9(45%) opted for both mediums. 2(10%) teachers prefer working on a digital device. It reflects that teachers are in favour of employing both mediums for assessment.

#### 4.5 Using Print-only Resources vs. Using Digital-only Resources

Indubitably, before COVID-19, many teachers and students relied on printed materials in EFL classes. Conversely, online learning/teaching compelled teachers and learners to bring into play digital learning devices due to their assistance, which caused paperless classrooms. Of the surveyed teachers, 65% reported employing a mix of print (papers) and mobile phones/computers as digital resources in their classrooms; 30% rely on printed-based materials, and one teacher uses only digital materials (Figure2). The survey respondents demonstrated that they employ both printed and digital resources. This could be interpreted that using printed-only resources in EFL classrooms has not been rendered obsolete by digital learning materials, and that teachers allow learners to use them, especially mobile phones, in the classroom to achieve academic reading purposes but otherwise learning activities.



**Figure2.**

*Print-only Resources vs. Digital-only Resources*

#### 4.6 Incorporating Digital Reading Forms into EFL Instruction

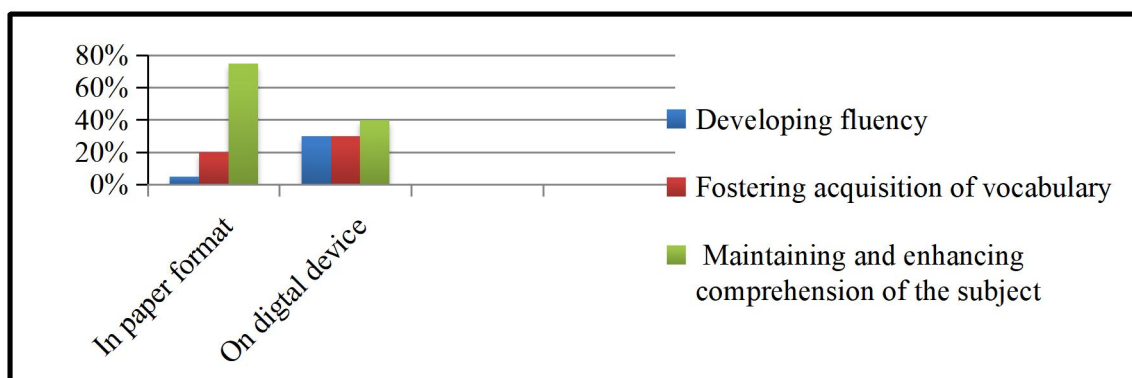
As lectures/handouts are most typically distributed in digital formats in a way to integrate new technologies in the educational context and facilitate the learning process, the participants were asked about the frequency of incorporating some digital reading forms into their instruction to help us reflect on the way how reading as mediated by digital gadgets is practiced in the EFL setting. More than half of the respondents (55%) noted skimming, scanning and key-wording spotting as the most used forms in some but not all lectures, with 60% identifying the use of selective reading and with more than half (75%) noting the use of bouncing reading —as identified by moving more rapidly between pages or various sections and spend less time on each (Table1). Therefore, bouncing, selective and shallower reading are the most predominant forms of digital reading employed occasionally, depending on the allotted time, learning objectives and subject.

**Table 1.***Frequency of Incorporating Digital Reading Forms into Instruction*

	<b>In all lectures</b>		<b>In some lectures</b>		<b>Almost never</b>	
	<b>F</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>F</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>F</b>	<b>%</b>
Skimming digital texts or web pages in search for pertinent information	7	35	1	55	2	10
Using keyword spotting/searching as a strategy to locate needed information	8	40	1	55	1	5
Scanning digital texts or web pages to read only the content that is important	7	35	1	55	2	10
Selecting only portions or parts of the digital content to simply find pertinent information	6	30	2	60	2	10
Rarely read more than 1 page of any digital document	1	5	8	40	11	55
Reading the first part of a digital text and skip to the last part	1	5	7	35	12	60
Moving more rapidly between pages or various section and spend less time on each	1	5	5	7	4	20

*4.7 Pedagogical Uses of Digital and Print-Based Materials*

Since the online survey is intended for both reading and other subject teachers, the pedagogical uses of digital gadgets in the classroom are included to maintain comprehension, as indicated by 40% of respondents; developing fluency was identified by 30% of respondents, and equally, 30% of respondents reported employing them as a means to foster the acquisition of vocabulary (Figure3). Conversely, 75% of the survey respondents reported that they bring into play print-based resources in order to maintain and enhance comprehension of the courses they are teaching, signifying that comprehension can be enhanced by print-based materials, and only 20% reported the use of printed materials to foster the acquisition of vocabulary. One teacher, on the other hand, relies on print to develop students' fluency.

**Figure3.***Pedagogical Uses of Digital and Print-Based Materials**4.8 Digital Literacy Skills and Competencies in the Classroom*

Becoming a digitally literate teacher is a new, challenging endeavour to understand the digital tools, platforms and skills needed to deepen teaching potential. It aligns with developing basic and necessary digital competencies to assist learners in leveraging their use of digital devices in purposive and wise ways. In terms of the digital literacy competencies and skills teachers moderately prioritize could be classified as basic and critical skills, namely keyword searching, as it is taught by 55%, and evaluation, as it is taught by 65% of respondents (Table 2). There seems to be no difference in the use of selection; as we reached agreement and disagreement on the same item. Regarding comparing, navigating, social collaboration and participation, most teachers were not aligned, revealing that they are not considered. This may reflect teachers' digital literacy and the need for more awareness of advanced digital reading skills.

**Table2.***Digital Literacy Skills and Competencies in the Classroom*

	Yes		No	
How to use reading platforms to select what to read	10	50%	10	50%
How to evaluate the accuracy of the information on the internet	13	65%	7	35%
How to share their opinions regarding what they are reading on online network and engage in discussing its content using online network (such as weblogs, wiki and LinkedIn)	7	35%	13	65%
How to use keywords to find digital information by using different reading platforms	11	55%	9	45%
How to use hyperlinks/hypermedia when navigating documents on the internet	6	30%	14	70%
How to compare different reading web pages and decide on the most appropriate information for the lectures	7	35%	13	65%

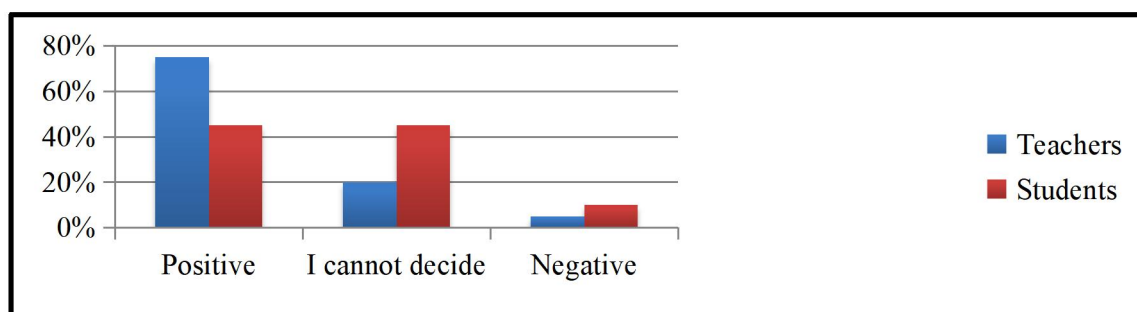
*4.9 Incorporating Digital Devices into EFL Literacy Instruction*

The sudden transition to online teaching/learning due to the COVID-19 epidemic and the advancement of education through technology is an opportunity for teachers to become

digital citizens. The most frequently occurring response was that the informants' uses of digital devices in EFL instruction to achieve different academic reading objectives have recently evolved (assuming that 65% is considerably higher than 35%).

#### *4.10 Investigating the Influence of Digital Gadgets on EFL Teachers' and Students' Reading Skills and Practices*

In terms of the influence of digital gadgets on EFL teachers' reading skills and practices because of the adaptation of e-learning/teaching, the positive influence outweighs its negative. 15(75%) of 20(100%) completing the online survey reported that digital gadgets have a positive influence on their reading skills and practices; 20% of the surveyed participants remain impartial, with only 5% identifying their influence as unfavourable (Figure 4). As the young generations are growing up using technology, when asked about how digital gadgets have influenced their students' reading skills and practices, the results were that almost half of the respondents (45%) rated them as having a positive influence. In comparison, 45% were undecided, with 10% identifying them as having a negative influence. Not all the surveyed respondents were reading teachers; therefore, they reported being uncertain.



**Figure 4.**

*The Influence of Digital Gadgets on EFL Teachers' and Students' Reading Skills and Practices*

#### *4.11 Teachers' Opinions about Incorporating Screen/Digital Reading into EFL Literacy Instruction*

Since teaching learners how to read is taught in only some departments of English, the last question asks about teachers' opinions on the importance of incorporating digital-based devices into instruction to enhance reading skills and practices. In considering the reasons why 75% of informants, representing the majority, provide positive opinions, their responses could be summarized as follows:

-Affordability T1: "Students can easily access the digital materials that cost less if we compare them with print resources."

- Flexibility T7: "The digital reading version is easily navigated through the web".

-Portability T20: "A digital device can be carried and read everywhere at any time."

-Availability and ubiquity T5: "Unlike digital texts, print resources are hardly obtainable."

-Convenience and practicality T16: "Digital devices can enhance reading and writing as well as comprehension skills and help learners practice beyond the classroom setting; T10: "...and to be able to use soft skills"; T3: "...and for teachers to select appropriate materials and teach learners how to use digital materials".

-Motivation and engagement: T4: "as they are visual aids, they are motivating, engaging and attractive for many learners".

Conversely, the informants (10%) who provided negative opinions reported that digital devices allow learners to: "Skim throughout the digital material," T11, demonstrating the absence of careful reading.

## **5. Discussion**

The digital reading practices in different EFL settings mirror teachers' digital literacy and competence, which could undoubtedly render their professional development, which most likely influences learners' learning outcomes. Being aware of the nature of digital reading, including behaviours, practices, strategies and skills, would assist teachers in incorporating different reading modes and practices into their instruction. Teachers should be adequately trained to incorporate digital texts, tools, techniques, and platforms into instruction. The results of the present study unravel teachers' technology dependency whilst reading; they have developed a flexible and convenient way to read and practice reading digitally. It is to state that reading practices mediated by digital gadgets, namely the computer and mobile phone, have become the most used gadgets as information resources. These devices are used to read different genres. The mobile phone is employed as a reading device due to its closeness and ubiquity (Balling et al., 2019). As mediated by computers, reading is practiced to serve different academic purposes. One should be tempted to conclude how digital reading can be appropriately integrated into practicing reading components or the reading skill per se. Print-based and digital resources are employed to maintain comprehension, though previous research findings are still inconsistent; as Pardede (2019) pointed out, develop fluency and foster vocabulary acquisition, and print materials are employed to maintain and enhance comprehension. Teachers' willingness to employ digital reading devices for personal or professional growth is unquestionable. Hence, their attachment to printed texts would not be easily disdained—as Balling et al. (2019) accentuated. Such practices can be shared with their learners, and most likely seize the opportunity to teach them how to read digitally. Consequently, bouncing, selective, and shallower reading were the most predominant forms of digital reading, as Al-Seghayer, 2023 showed, which are not distinguished from the strategies employed in traditional printed text reading (Pardede, 2019). The digital literacy competencies and skills teachers prioritize could be classified as essential and critical skills. Most teachers reported the positive influence of digital gadgets on their reading skills and practices, which align with Al-Seghayer 2023; Bozgun 2022 and Manula, 2019, but otherwise, they are not sure about their potential influence on their learners. Their opinions regarding incorporating digital gadgets into instruction are very promising, as Medjahed (2023) revealed. It may be worth stressing at this point that print reading remains a challenge owing to today's learners' reliance on their mobile phones in EFL classrooms, which is indeed alerting.

## **6. Conclusion**

This study emphasizes how important it is for teachers to be digitally literate and competent in order to introduce digital reading practices in EFL classrooms. Teachers should have sufficient training to integrate successfully digital reading modes and technologies into their lectures, in addition to having a thorough understanding of digital reading behaviours, practices, skills, and strategies (Azman et al., 2017; Al-Seghayer, 2023). The findings highlight a change in reading habits by highlighting the growing reliance on digital devices like computers and mobile phones for reading, both for personal and academic purposes (Madan, 2018; Balling et al., 2019). These results are in line with Balling et al. (2019), who observed a generational shift toward digital reading, and with Medjahed (2023), who reported positive attitudes among Algerian teachers towards incorporating digital tools into literacy instruction. Despite increasing dependence on digital resources, printed books continue to be important because they provide special benefits for enhancing comprehension, critical thinking, and in-depth interaction with the material (Pardede, 2019). In contrast to Pardede's

(2019) claim that printed texts can be superior in fostering comprehension, this study suggests that digital reading can also support thoughtful engagement when properly integrated. The implications of these findings extend to the classroom, where teachers play a pivotal role in modelling effective digital reading strategies and instilling critical thinking skills in their learners (Medjahed, 2023; Bozgun & Can, 2022). Encouraging learners to use digital tools wisely and safely while recognizing the value of print-based reading can lead to more effective literacy development. Furthermore, introducing English at the primary school level in Algeria may serve as a foundation for integrating digital and print-based reading practices and likewise preparing learners for the demands of higher education and beyond. Ultimately, fostering a thoughtful approach to digital reading, grounded in critical literacy and complemented by traditional print-based strategies, will empower both teachers and learners to navigate the complexities of today's digital world. This holistic approach holds the potential to enhance learning outcomes, cultivate lifelong learning, and support the development of active and informed global citizens. Recent studies also underscore the need to align teaching practices with digital shift, as learners are increasingly engaged in online and social media environments, requiring new approaches that promote collaboration and digital literacy (Azzoui, 2024). In language learning, digital tools now enable students to actively practice communication skills in virtual, interactive spaces (Saihi, 2024).

With regard to the limitations of the present study, although it addresses EFL teachers from different universities, the sample size was relatively small due to the lack of responses to the online survey, despite multiple reminders. This limitation may affect the generalization of the findings. Furthermore, the investigation relied only on a descriptive tool, which may have restricted the depth of the analysis and the exploration of additional aspects of the topic.

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