

English Literature Students at Spanish University Have Positive Perceptions Towards but Limited Understanding of Online Resources

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Evidence Summary

English Literature Students at Spanish University Have Positive Perceptions Towards but Limited Understanding of Online Resources

A Review of:

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Abstract

Objective – To assess students' perception, use, and format preferences of library resources.

Design – Online survey questionnaire.

Setting – A public university in Spain.

Subjects – 134 second-year, third-year, and fourth-year undergraduate English language and literature students.

Methods – An anonymous survey was built using Google Forms and shared with eligible participants during March and April 2021. Survey participation was voluntary, although students were encouraged to respond and were provided with class time to do so. Nonetheless, due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic at the time of this study, courses were taught in a hybrid (both in-person and online) format

and class attendance was not mandatory. The survey consisted of six multiple choice and four open-ended questions, and answers were required for all 10 questions.

Main Results – Respondents were mostly satisfied with the available resources in supporting their studies in English literature and culture, with the majority preferring to access resources online (51%) or through both online and print formats (14%). Convenience was the most commonly cited reason for favoring online access, while improved processing and learning were mentioned by those preferring print. A majority of respondents also indicated they have used online resources from either their home university library (72%) or other libraries (55%). Conversely, 29% of the respondents were unable to identify any specific electronic resources.

Conclusion – Study results indicate that Spanish undergraduate students majoring in English literature generally have a positive perception of library resources in supporting their studies and prefer online access over print. However, many of these students may also have an incorrect or limited understanding of how to differentiate between library resources, general websites, web search engines, or computer programs.

Commentary

Even though much research has been conducted about students' perception and use of academic library resources, this article provides a timely contribution to the existing literature by focusing on the unique perspective of non-anglophone students enrolled in an English literature program and could be of interest to practitioners serving similar student populations. Study findings both affirm results from similar recent research on different student groups' preferences for print and online resources (Mizrachi & Salaz, 2020; Zell, 2020) and provide new insights into the challenges faced by non-native English-speaking students in identifying and using English literature resources.

An examination of the study using the Evidence Based Librarianship (EBL) Critical Appraisal Checklist (Glynn, 2006) yielded an overall validity of 71%, which is below the accepted threshold of 75%. Nevertheless, the authors can be commended for disclosing the full survey instrument, providing a succinct but thorough analysis of the results, acknowledging potential limitations of the findings, and identifying areas for further investigations. Despite several limitations in the study's population selection and data collection practices, its design and results each scored over 80% in sectional validity. The authors also provided details about the research methodology at a level that would enable replication.

On the other hand, readers would benefit from more details about the student population. The researchers provide sound rationale for establishing parameters for their intended population but neglect to provide the total number of eligible participants. Without the actual population size and consequently the survey response rate, it is difficult to assess whether the study results sufficiently represent the study population. The authors do not explain whether eligible participants absent during the in-class survey distributions were invited through other methods. The researchers also do not explain how they controlled for duplication of responses since links to the anonymous survey were shared in multiple classes during the data collection period.

Moreover, inconsistencies in the survey questionnaire suggest the instrument was unlikely to have been validated. Terms including "online," "electronic," and "digital" were used interchangeably to describe resources throughout the survey, which could have confused the non-native English-speaking respondents. In addition, only the last three survey questions explicitly referred to "library resources," which may have led respondents to conclude that "resources" in the other seven questions included both library and non-library resources. These types of terminology inconsistencies may have contributed to respondents naming Google or Kindle as resource examples for supporting their

studies. Finally, answer options for Q6 assumes that respondents have either found a resource to be user-friendly or that the user was unable to access the resource. This dichotomy of options likely reflects the researchers' assumptions about the user-friendliness of library resources and fails to account for the experiences of students who did not find these library resources to be user-friendly but were able to access them regardless.

Because of these validity concerns with the study population, survey instrument, and data collection method, readers are advised to consider the representativeness of findings from this article with some reservation. Nonetheless, this article highlighted the unique perspectives of non-anglophone academic library users of English literature resources and provided a possible foundation for future scholars interested in further investigating similar topics.

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