

Think India (Quarterly Journal)

ISSN: 0971-1260 Vol-22, Special Issue-07

Two-Day National seminar on

"Artificial Intelligence, Multimedia and ICT in Teaching, Learning and Acquisition"

sponsored by

Indian Council of Social Science Research, New Delhi

on 23rd and 24th September 2019 at **Department of English,**
SRI S. Ramasamy Naidu Memorial College, Sattur, Tamilnadu, India



Validating The Opportunities And Challenges Of Online Courses In English

R. Nagalakshmi

Research Scholar in English

Nehru Memorial College

Puthanampatti – 621 007

Dr. K.T. Tamilmani

Dean, Academic Affairs &

Associate Professor and Head Department of English

Nehru Memorial College

Puthanampatti – 621 007

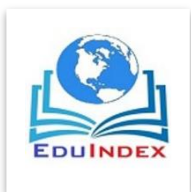
Abstract

The technological advancements of the 21st century have effected predominant developments in the field of education. These sustainable developments continue to make education accessible to all those who are outside the conventional schools. Online tools for learning are in their attempt to set benchmarks in providing the learners with diverse courses with specific sets of modules for each course within a given time. The responsibility falls on the shoulders of the educators in validating the pivotal role played by such courses in imparting knowledge and skills. The invention of online learning tools has eased the language learning process and learners learn the components of the language at their own pace. Further it has attracted a huge number of learners irrespective of age group. Though online education has become an alternate to the traditional system, the effectiveness of language learning through online courses remains a question. Also, online courses on language learning demand more attention as the learners are to be trained on the LSRW skills. Various reasons may be ascribed to substantiate the effectiveness of online courses. But it is obvious that such courses may not enhance the students in the holistic aspects which are the main concerns of a traditional classroom. This paper would attempt a validation of the opportunities and challenges of the online courses in English.

Keywords: Language learning, ICT, Online learning, Validation, Heutagogy

1. Introduction

We live in a society in which technology is in the centre rather than in the periphery. Technology has pervaded all the arenas of human life and has become indispensable. In the field of education, technology, as a medium, has revolutionized the teaching-learning from teacher-centered to learner-centered approach and now it has been further elevated to the learner-friendly or self-paced learning process. The conventional style of teaching fails to engage the new-gen learners as they prefer to be hyper-active with gadgets or multitaskers.



Think India (Quarterly Journal)

ISSN: 0971-1260 Vol-22, Special Issue-07

Two-Day National seminar on "Artificial Intelligence, Multimedia and ICT in Teaching, Learning and Acquisition"

sponsored by

Indian Council of Social Science Research, New Delhi
on 23rd and 24th September 2019 at **Department of English,**
SRI S. Ramasamy Naidu Memorial College, Sattur, Tamilnadu, India



Technology has broadened the gamut of teaching and learning and has enabled us to rethink the objectives, role of the educators and the learners, pedagogy and assessments. Online learning has stemmed from such a rethinking and it promotes collaborative learning and establishes an array of disciplines that are deficient in the conventional mode of learning. It aims at experiential type of learning and the intervention of technology in the teaching and learning has assisted language acquisition in a dimension in which the Gen-Z learners not only involve themselves in language acquisition but also produce language simultaneously. Thus, as Stewart Hase and Chris Kenyon point out, the learners are influenced to be prominent in the learner-centered instructional strategy meant for self-directed learning called 'heutagogy'.

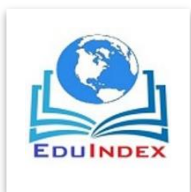
2. Opportunities and Challenges in Learning the English Language Online

Traditional teaching and learning have been seen as an idealistic medium that engages students in various language activities focusing on the basic LSRW skills. But these skills remain inadequate for an effective communication in the present scenario. The stereotyped methodology for teaching the English language has not rooted credence among the low proficiency learners. The situation entails online learning as a medium that endeavours to cater to the needs of the learners and it acts as a contrivance for collaborative learning.

Online learning is the new epitome of distance learning that blends technology and teaching-learning process. It connects the learners, from different cultural background, who are interested in learning, irrespective of distance, age and other factors that hinder learning in conventional classrooms. Thus the learners are exposed to various dialects of the English language and participate in the deployment of various components of language in specific situations. By doing so, they are exposed to the complex areas and are made to undergo double-loop learning. The two major concerns/questions that influence the learners to prefer self-determined learning are:

- 1) What it is to learn online?
- 2) What would be the result of the learning experience?

Thus, in the process of learning a language online, they are motivated to participate in a constructive learning environment that orients them towards application and analysis of what they learn and expand their ability to construct and create using what they have learned. Thus, they play the dual role of an analyst and synthesizer and discover their abilities to become self-reliant and to formulate ideas that would help them to adapt the complexities of the real life situations. Thus, online learning becomes a platform for experimenting the



Think India (Quarterly Journal)

ISSN: 0971-1260 Vol-22, Special Issue-07

Two-Day National seminar on "Artificial Intelligence, Multimedia and ICT in Teaching, Learning and Acquisition"

sponsored by

Indian Council of Social Science Research, New Delhi
on 23rd and 24th September 2019 at **Department of English,**
SRI S. Ramasamy Naidu Memorial College, Sattur, Tamilnadu, India



heutagogic approach in learning rather than being just pedagogy and encourages their adroitness implicitly.

Online language learning, unlike the traditional one, demands situations that would reflect on the natural acquisition of the language. Learners in online courses, as Mark Edmundson (an English Professor at the University of Virginia) says, will develop “monologue and not a real dialogue in the learning environment” [2]. The educators, to meet this situation, should take up their role as facilitators and try to frame a methodology that would instigate the propensity of the learners to acknowledge the presence of their peers with discussions in the group forum. But, if the facilitator fails to assist the learners, there might be disturbance in the group cohesion and the direction of the communication will change. Further, failing to acknowledge the presence of learners and their ability will leave negative imprints and the learners will feel themselves isolated. Thus, the intention of such instructional approach remains to emphasise on ‘how’ technology is used in disseminating and sharing the available information and not on ‘which’ technology is used. When the learners are gratified with the learning environment they will become more creative and responsive and will pitch themselves in the unremitting process of self-education.

The effectiveness of the course may be affected when the facilitators’ technological competence do not match with the techno-savvy learners. With the intrusion of technology, the educators themselves become fidgety and feel incompatible to use the virtual world. Also, they miss the non-verbal cues that would hint on the performance anxiety of the students. Though they lack immediacy in responding to the queries, the materials and the discussions automatically registered in the group forum enable the learners continue the language acquisition process. Internal links to libraries and the lectures of the facilitators may be provided for further learning. Thus, time and the availability of the instructor and the resources are not constraints in online classes. But, it is important to update the contents of the course with time so as to make online learning a scaffold to support students.

Google classroom, for instance, enables the facilitators to frame assignments and class modules and allows them to assess the performance of the students online. It helps not only with the assessment but also reassessment of the assignments submitted by the learners. It also allows co-teaching possible where facilitators from various places can join in making a course effective.

Online courses have broadened the streams and have bestowed autonomy on learners who choose their streams in accordance with their learning interests as well as learning objectives. Illustrating this feature, many universities offer online courses in developing skills like critical thinking, content writing and so on. In this way online learning distorts the hegemony

Think India (Quarterly Journal)

ISSN: 0971-1260 Vol-22, Special Issue-07

Two-Day National seminar on

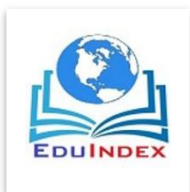
"Artificial Intelligence, Multimedia and ICT in Teaching, Learning and Acquisition"

sponsored by

Indian Council of Social Science Research, New Delhi

on 23rd and 24th September 2019 at Department of English,

SRI S. Ramasamy Naidu Memorial College, Sattur, Tamilnadu, India



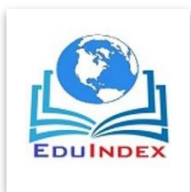
and empowers the students by stimulating their perception to ascertain their academic abilities and develop strategies for self-learning at their own pace. It is also mandatory that we require an appraisal and accreditation of online courses and the efficacy of such universities which offer such courses every now and then.

Though the multimedia resources engage the learners actively, it is unrealistic to expect that all learners will perform with better performance in virtual space. Not all the students have a prior knowledge of technology and they may not understand the jargons used in the domain of technology and online learning. It is an impediment that prevents development in language learning.

Online language learning is devoid of group activities like role play, simulation exercise, constructing dialogues and other such that aim at constructive learning. Conventional classrooms fortify the extroverts and such students when exposed to textual space would find it difficult to establish their presence. But social presence is an attribute created only in the virtual classroom and it has a greater impact on the behaviour of participants who attempt to explore a medium that is different from the conventional one. Further, the virtual space has enabled the learners to develop an electronical personality that allows them to formulate responses and personalize communication. They develop critical thinking, decision making and experiential learning. Motivation skills and conservation of time and effort are the human factors that influence learners to learn language online. It also enhances their potential to deal with emotional and psychological issues in the textual form. Moreover, introverts find it easy to have access to such a space.

Online classrooms influence the learning process of the students as they are given access to a friendly social environment that would allow them to try new things. Amateur learners will find themselves at ease as there are options to diversify the methodology of instruction. Language learning in an online environment aims at producing socially constructed meaning. Learners indulge in argument and questioning and the online facilitators intend to achieve agreement on social meaning. Such an ability to use language to deal with conflicts is often curtailed in a traditional classroom where the instructor interrupts the enthusiastic learners and manages the classroom.

Self-discipline becomes an important trait while learning online. It helps an individual do with the tasks independently and will result in self-motivation. A student who follows the lectures will not hesitate to give and correct his/her responses. The course designer should consider the inquisitiveness of the learners while formulating the course structure as self-directed questions would develop the learner's competence. Inquisitive learners design their own strategies and learning methods and embrace transformative learning. Thus the need to



Think India (Quarterly Journal)

ISSN: 0971-1260 Vol-22, Special Issue-07

Two-Day National seminar on "Artificial Intelligence, Multimedia and ICT in Teaching, Learning and Acquisition"

sponsored by

Indian Council of Social Science Research, New Delhi
on 23rd and 24th September 2019 at **Department of English,**
SRI S. Ramasamy Naidu Memorial College, Sattur, Tamilnadu, India



meet the anxiety of the student to use the language and to overcome the difficulty in understanding and responding to the language becomes satisfied.

The outcome of the course, in online classes, is measured by the effectiveness of skills obtained by the learners. The following demands should be met with to ensure the effectiveness of the course:

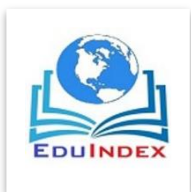
1. Validity of Qualification
2. Reliability of the System
3. Fairness of Assessments
4. Benchmarking the Correlation between Thinking and Performance
5. Opportunity for Practical Reflection
6. Sustenance of the Interest and Involvement in learning through Online
7. Cooperative Construction of Knowledge

Courses with these components would result in equivalent academic standards as obtained in traditional teaching methods. The hypothesis for the introduction of the course and its compatibility with the existing courses should be considered while scheduling a course as it will certify the sustainability and employability.

Government of India has taken measures to implement such quality learning with the introduction of SWAYAM, an exclusive portal for online learning, with NPTEL, UGC, CEC, IIMB, IGNOU, NCERT, NIOS, AICTE and NIIT as coordinators of the program. SWAYAM PRABHA, a tele-portal with number of channels on diverse subjects, and National Digital Library initiated by MHRD are proof that online learning is effective and inevitable. To enhance the learning of English in a multilingual country like India, pedagogies driven by technological instructions have to be implemented encouraging the learners and teachers to use the e-learning services by creating awareness.

3. Conclusion

Thus, the technology enabled online learning approach has taken the language learning beyond the curriculum and the shift from the verbal generation to the virtual generation has exposed the learners to an integrated approach and it aims at establishing a set of new objectives and outcomes, guidelines and space for discussion that would meet the demand of



Think India (Quarterly Journal)

ISSN: 0971-1260 Vol-22, Special Issue-07

Two-Day National seminar on

"Artificial Intelligence, Multimedia and ICT in Teaching, Learning and Acquisition"

sponsored by

Indian Council of Social Science Research, New Delhi
on 23rd and 24th September 2019 at **Department of English,**
SRI S. Ramasamy Naidu Memorial College, Sattur, Tamilnadu, India



holistic development rather than imposing the rules of language components on the learners. This would result in a web of learning which will lead to collaboration of natural language acquisition and skill development. The three L's that determine the quality of any online course would be layout, language and liability and the success of such courses in helping the students learn the English language relies upon advancement and implementation of pedagogical innovations that would legitimize the deployment of the components of heutagogy. Thus the future learner would be surrounded with umpteen number of online courses and heutagogy would be in the limelight for a long time.

Reference

- [1] Bowen, William G, *Higher Education in the Digital Age*, Princeton University Press, New York . 2013.
- [2] Edmundson, Mark. "The Trouble With Online Education." *The New York Times*, 20 July 2012, https://www.nytimes.com/2012/07/20/opinion/the-trouble-with-online-education.html?_r=0 Accessed on Oct.02, 2019
- [3] Gilbert, Brittany, "Online Learning Revealing the Benefits and Challenges" *Education Masters*. 2015.
- [4] Hase, Stewart, and Chris Kenyon. "From Andragogy to Heutagogy." *EPublications@SCU*, https://epubs.scu.edu.au/gcm_pubs/99/
- [5] Hung, Jui-Long and Yang, Dazhi "The Validation of an Instrument for Evaluating the Effectiveness of Professional Development Program on Teaching Online," *Journal of Educational Technology Development and Exchange (JETDE)*: Vol.8: Iss.1, Article 2. (2015) <http://aquila.usm.edu/jetde/vol8/iss1/2> Accessed on Sep. 28, 2019.
- [6] Palloff, Rena M and Pratt, Keith, *Building Online Learning Communities*, John Wiley & Sons, San Francisco 2007.
- [7] Tom. "5 Disadvantages to Consider about Online Education." *Peterson's*, 1 May 2019, <https://www.petersons.com/blog/5-disadvantages-to-consider-about-online-education/> Accessed on Sep.28,2019