

The Impact of Online Teaching on English Language Learning at University level

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ABSTRACT: This paper aims at investigating the impact of online teaching on the process of English language learning. Online teaching nowadays has been an important component in education around the world. That is to say, technology integration is increasingly being used in the process of teaching and learning languages. There is a considerable number of studies observing the entry and use of online teaching, yet no studies have examined the impact of online teaching on English language learning at the university level in Kurdistan Region of Iraq. Thereby, for the purpose of achieving the aim of the study, i.e., investigating the impact of online teaching, a questionnaire was administered to a randomly selected sample of 25 senior students at the Depts. of English Language and Literature from some selected universities in Kurdistan Region of Iraq. Results revealed that the majority of the students are not in favor of e-learning. In other words, students' attitudes towards e-learning indicated that they are not really ready to deal positively with this mode of learning. Accordingly, online teaching or as it is known e-learning does not seem to improve students' skills and needs in English language learning.

KEYWORDS –online teaching, university level, English language learning.

I. INTRODUCTION

Over the past decade the occurrence of online education has continued to expand, particularly in English language learning. As it has truly been noticed that many schools as well as universities now offer students learning, examination, communication, and assignment submission options through web-based applications. In other words, online teaching also known as e-learning in academia has gone from an experimental novelty to a nearly ubiquitous teaching tool. Frankly, it is simply referred to the idea of using online tools in the process of learning and teaching. According to Simon (2012), online teaching is a course where most or all of the content is delivered online. Typically, it has no face-to-face meetings, and at least eighty percent of the course is delivered online.

Indeed, while Simon has one definition for online teaching, other scholars, researchers and educators have found their own ways to describe online teaching and learning. For instance, Naidu (2006) points out that e-learning is commonly referred to intentional use of networked information and communications technology in teaching and learning. Also, online learning is used to refer to e-learning, Internet-based learning, web-based instruction, virtual learning, or net-based learning (Urdu & Weggen, 2000). Besides, Hockly (2015) presents the term 'online language learning' to refer to language learning that takes place almost fully online, via the internet, with no face-to-face component. In addition, Scrivener (2011) defines e-learning as a website that brings together a number of resources for running a course.

As a result of the entry of technology, the method of English language learning has, by all means, been impacted considerably. As technology integration has increasingly been used in the process of learning and teaching, Gilakjani (2017) states that the application of technologies in education opens a new area of knowledge and provides a tool that has the great potential to change the existing teaching methods. Likewise,

Kuama and Intharaksa (2016) describe online teaching as an important component in education. Additionally, technology is the center of the globalization process, and it impacts education as well as culture (Graddol, 1997, as cited in Gilakjani, 2017). Moreover, Keengwe and Kidd (2010) assert that online teaching offers new and exciting opportunities to expand the learning environment for diverse student populations.

Studies have observed the entry and use of online teaching in the process of learning; however, online teaching is not without its faults. Unfortunately, the impact of online teaching on English language learners' accomplishment hasn't effectively been determined especially in our context and that no evidence to ensure that online teaching is delivering the desired results has been noticed. Therefore, the central objective of this study is to explore how online teaching affects the accomplishment of English language learners.

II. RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The current study tries to answer the following research questions:

1. Does online teaching improve the achievement of English language learning students?
2. Are the learners motivated to learn through online teaching?
3. What could possibly be the advantages and drawbacks of the online teaching process from the students' point of view?

III. LITERATURE REVIEW

Among the 4,000 to 5,000 living languages, English is by far the most widely used language. As Rao (2019) emphasizes that English plays a prominent role in almost all the fields in the present globalized world. In some countries, English is used as the second language, while in some others it is used as a foreign language. That is to say, English has increasingly become an essential language for learning as well as international communication. Indeed, due to the entry of the integration of technology, the method of English language learning has been changed dramatically (Chhabra, 2012). This implies that technology has taken a key role in learning and teaching English language skills, and it is one of accomplishments of mankind which affects language learning and teaching tremendously. Chappelle (2003) comments that in many settings the internet and other electronic sources make large quantities of English available to learners, and accordingly amplify the importance of English language learning internationally. Truthfully, many researchers have undertaken studies to detect the outcomes of online English learning, and the results of their studies are sometimes contradictory. Before this study reviews the literature, some statements in regard to online learning stated by researchers are reported. For example, Finlay et al. (2004) argue that being in an online class has a positive effect on students' satisfaction and participation. Ni (2013) notes that there can be no significant differences in the outcomes of online learning and face-to-face learning. According to Xu and Jaggars (2014), students have more difficulties succeeding in online settings than in traditional classes.

Undoubtedly, researchers have conducted a considerable number of studies about the effect of online teaching on English language learning. A survey conducted by Simon (2012) on ten faculty members in United States, for example, revealed that despite reportedly enjoying some certain aspects of online teaching, such as flexibility in time and location, five of ten participants expressed a clear-cut preference for the face-to-face classroom because they appeared to believe that face-to-face teaching was a better learning venue. Three teachers were ambivalent about which modality they would choose, one participant expressed no preference for one modality over the other, and the last one reported liking online teaching better.

Meanwhile, these findings are also mirrored in an extensive study conducted by Zanjani and Ramzani (2012). The study aimed at examining the acceptance of e-learning technology carried out by English teachers and students. For the purpose of investigating the acceptance of electronic education, thirteen teachers and ninety undergraduate students, as the participants of the study, were taken from Islamic Azad University. In order to achieve the objective of the research, the researchers employed a descriptive-survey method and also a questionnaire and interviews with English language students and teachers who were recruited as the population

of the research. The results, however, uncovered weak attitudes of teachers and students towards the fact that utilizing e-learning does not require strenuous efforts, and this leads to a weakness in accepting information in the field of e-learning.

Another survey was undertaken by Ramzani et al. (2013) to investigate effective factors in e-learning acceptance by English language students. The study discussed the role of technology in learning English as a foreign language, and examined the role of individual, organizational and social factors in accepting e-learning technology by English language students. The investigators used a descriptive-survey method and a sample of questionnaire and interview with English language students who were the target sample of the study. The findings of the study indicated that as a first reaction students consider e-learning and they believe the outcomes of using e-learning will lead to the improvement of their academic achievements. Nevertheless, the study declared that e-learning has its flaws too since the attitudes of some students reveal that there is a lack of motivation for the students who use e-learning as they believe that e-learning is not easy to be used. Therefore, the researchers concluded that due to the intention and willingness of the students to use e-learning, it is therefore necessary to use advertisements and motivations to influence students so as to increase their tendency towards the use of e-learning.

A comprehensive research under the title *How Effective is e-learning in Teaching English* carried out by Al-Maqtri (2014) investigated the state of e-learning in teaching English in the English Departments in King Khalid University in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. The research spanned over a three-year period starting from the academic year 2011-2012 and expanding to 2013-2014. To achieve the objectives of the study, forty undergraduate students and sixteen teachers were taken as the subjects of the study, and three different tools were utilized: observations, questionnaires and interviews. The findings indeed affirm that only teachers are in favor of e-learning and that they think e-learning is effective, whereas students do not consider e-learning as an effective way of learning since, as an illustration, it is indicated that students are not motivated to work with e-learning, as well as a considerable number of students do not have access to internet and therefore the students are unable to fulfill the online requirements. As a result, e-learning is found not to make the English learning any better.

IV. METHODOLOGY

Participants of the study

The subjects of the study were college students. They were senior students from department of English at University of Zakho. In point of fact, random selection was utilized to choose only twenty-five students. The reason behind selecting senior students was that they were believed to have a better experience with e-learning.

Data Collection Procedures

The researchers used a questionnaire that was distributed to 25 senior students in the Department of English Language and Literature at University of Zakho. The procedures of data collection started in January and extended to February, 2021 in the middle of the academic year 2020-2021. The questionnaire was designed to investigate the impact of online teaching on English language learning. It consisted of 15 statements in regard to the use of e-learning and pertinent to the research questions. Ahead of the data collection, all participants were informed of the purpose of the study. Besides, they were informed of anonymity issues too and that data would be merely used for research purposes. Each participant was given a sheet of the questionnaire. They responded to the questionnaire individually. The average time taken to complete the questionnaire was between 5 to 10 minutes.

Data Analysis Method

The method of data analysis chosen for the study was Statistical Package for the Social Sciences, mostly known as SPSS. Arkkelin (2014) defines SPSS as a software package that enables one to obtain statistics

ranging from simple descriptive numbers to complex analyses. In truth, the reason for choosing SPSS was due to the fact that it is regarded as one of the best methods of data analysis as Landau and Everitt (2004) state that SPSS presents data in a meaningful manner in order to come out with reasonable results and conclusions.

	Variables	Frequency	Percent
Gender	Female	13	52%
	Male	12	48%
	Total	25	100%
Year of study			
	4 th year	25	100%
	Total	25	100%

V. RESULTS

Demographic Data

Table 2: Research Question 1: Does online teaching improve the achievement of English language learning students?

No Item	Strongly disagree		Disagree		Neutral		Agree		Strongly agree		Total		Mean	STD
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%		
1. Online teaching is more effective than traditional face-to face education	13	52	7	28	1	4	2	8	2	8	25	100	1.92	1.301
2. Online learning leads to non-confidence in face-to-face interaction	2	8	4	16	5	20	10	40	4	16	25	100	3.39	1.167
3. I believe using e-learning will improve the quality of my work	2	8	6	24	12	48	2	8	3	12	25	100	2.92	1.1
4. Learning is more obtainable when online teaching is used	3	12	9	36	4	16	5	20	4	16	25	100	2.92	1.367
5. Students of online classes can receive the same knowledge as students in face-to-face classes	11	44	4	16	5	20	2	8	3	12	25	100	2.28	1.301

Table 2 shows the students' responses to items 1-5 related to the students' perception of online teaching to indicate whether it improves their achievements or not. On the surface, it can be seen that students' opinions towards online teaching are negative. "Online teaching is more effective than traditional face-to-face

education” scored a mean of 1.92 to which 52% of students strongly disagree. A large number of informants representing 40%, which is the highest percentage of the item, agree that online learning leads to non-confidence in face-to-face interaction. Most students come to an uncertainty to item 3 that using e-learning will improve the quality of their work (mean score is 2.92). Also, the majority disagree that learning is more obtainable while using online teaching (with mean 2.92). Additionally, “students of online classes can receive the same knowledge as students in face-to-face classes” scored a mean of 2.28 to which 44% of the students as the highest percentage strongly disagree.

Table 3 Research Question 2: Are the learners motivated to learn through online teaching?

No Item	Strongly disagree		Disagree		Neutral		Agree		Strongly agree		Total		Mean	STD
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%		
6. I am excited to participate in online lectures	8	32	6	24	8	32	3	12	0	0	25	100	2.24	0.989
7. I would like to be taught online	5	20	12	48	5	20	2	8	1	4	25	100	2.28	1.007
8. I don't miss online classes because of their flexibility in time and place	10	40	3	12	6	24	2	8	4	16	25	100	2.48	1.439
9. It's easy to connect to the internet to access online lectures	8	32	4	16	3	12	7	28	3	12	25	100	2.72	1.567
10. E-learning gives much time to contact your teachers	3	12	3	12	5	20	10	40	4	16	25	100	3.36	1.225

Table 3 reveals students’ responses to items 6-10 concerned with students’ motivation in online classes. Unsurprisingly, this table also shows that students are unfavorable and that they aren’t motivated. “I am excited to participate in online lectures” scored a mean of 2.24 to which most students either strongly disagree or are neutral. A significant number of students representing 48% as the highest percentage disagree to be taught online. Besides, most students strongly disagree not to miss online classes because of their flexibility in time and place (with mean 2.48). In addition, many students do not believe it is easy to connect to the internet to access online lectures (mean score is 2.72). However, the majority agree that e-learning gives them much time to connect their teachers and this seems to be the only good point here (with mean 3.36).

Table 4 Research Question 3: What could possibly be the advantages and drawbacks of the online teaching process from the students' point of view?

No Item	Strongly disagree		Disagree		Neutral		Agree		Strongly agree		Total		Mean	STD
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%		
11. I am comfortable about communicating with group members electronically	5	20	8	32	5	20	6	24	1	4	25	100	3.59	1.209
12. E-learning is not convenient for every subject	6	24	2	8	2	8	7	28	8	32	25	100	3.36	1.624
13. It's difficult to use e-learning due to facing technical problems	2	8	1	4	5	20	13	52	4	16	25	100	3.64	1.062
14. It will be difficult for me to be skillful in the use of e-learning tools	1	4	4	16	8	32	6	24	6	24	25	100	3.48	1.142
15 There is no difficulty in understanding online lectures	9	36	5	20	4	16	3	12	4	16	25	100	2.52	1.465

Table 4 uncovers students' point of view regarding advantages and disadvantages of online teaching. Here, it can be seen that there is a general agreement that online teaching is disadvantageous. This is highlighted as most students disagree to be comfortable about communicating electronically (with mean 3.59). A large number strongly agree that e-learning is not suitable for all subjects (mean score is 3.36). Also, "it is difficult to use e-learning due to facing technical problems" scored a mean of 3.64 to which 52% of students agree on that. Many students are uncertain to say it will be difficult to be skillful in the use of e-learning tools (mean score is 3.48). Lastly, a significant number of students strongly disagree to item 15, "there is no difficulty in understanding online lectures", (with mean 2.52).

VI. DISCUSSION

As it could be seen from the data analysis, learners had negative attitudes and they did not show their preference towards e-learning mode. This is due to the fact they, i.e., learners disagreed to say online teaching is more effective than traditional face-to face education, learning is more obtainable when online teaching is used, or students of online classes can receive the same knowledge as students in face-to-face classes. They expressed their opinions that online learning leads to non-confidence in face-to-face interaction, and also they were unsure about whether online teaching will improve the quality of their work or not. Truthfully, these findings go in line

with a study conducted by Larsen et al. (2002) who observed that online students may not be able to reach their academic needs, concerns, and other pedagogical attributes of education (as cited in Elango et al., 2008). Besides that, learners had a lack of motivation in being learned online, and this demotivation has manifested itself in many different ways in students. For instance, they are not excited in participating online lectures, and they do not desire to be taught online. Similarly, some of them miss online lectures since not all of them have access to internet and that it is not easy for them to connect to the internet to access online lectures. Frankly, these results align with those of Minda (2020) which confirm that the internet-based learning poorly affects the students' willingness to learn, and that online learning does not awaken the students' motivation. To add more, in regard to the students' points of view about the advantages and disadvantages of e-learning, students found more disadvantages than advantages. That is to say, e-learning is disadvantageous since the majority are not comfortable about communicating with their colleagues electronically. Likewise, they emphasized that e-learning is not suitable for every subject, it is difficult to use e-learning because of facing technical problems, and besides they found it difficult to understand online lectures. Honestly, these findings are similar to those of Kearsley (2002), Niculescu-Aron et al. (2007), and Mohammadi et al. (2010). Kearsley (2002) comments that not all students are suited to online learning as completing an online course requires a lot of self-discipline and that they need to work hard in order to understand online lectures. Also, Niculescu-Aron et al. (2007) argue that social contacts and direct communication between teachers and students is one of the disadvantages of online teaching. Additionally, Mohammadi et al. (2010) state that some learners have little knowledge about using internet which leads them to be unable to work with it suitably.

VII. CONCLUSION

To conclude, the aim of this paper was to explore the way online teaching impacts the process of English language learning. Undoubtedly, as the world progresses the use of e-learning, i.e., the use of electronic devices, technology, and internet in teaching and learning process increases throughout the world and Kurdistan is no exception. As Tehrani (2009) confirms that e-learning has attained acceptance in many fields, mainly in academia. In other words, online teaching has presently taken a key role in learning and teaching languages, and in particular English (Shyamlee & Phil, 2012). Results of the current research study have reached the conclusion that students apparently do not seem to welcome e-learning manner of learning. That is to say, most of the students believe online teaching has had a negative impact on English language learning.

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