



# Impact of Online Teaching on ESL Learner's Language Learning and Their Performance

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## Abstract

The aim of the study is to identify the impact of the new normal education using online learning tools on the students of under graduation in the Language learning and their levels of performance. The COVID-19 pandemic has triggered new ways of learning. Digital learning has emerged as a necessary source of educating students to cover the loss on an experimental basis. The study is quantitative and qualitative in nature. The data was collected from 200 students studying Bachelor of Technology in various disciplines in 10 different autonomous engineering colleges in 4 districts of Central Andhra Pradesh, through online survey. A questionnaire has been distributed to identify their language learning levels and their performance levels of the language. Students' participation was invigorating and their response was found to be blended positive with some recommendations.

## 1. Introduction

The most common term that has been used after the pandemic is 'New Normal'. The COVID-19 pandemic has triggered new ways of learning. Increased use of online digital learning tools is the new normal in Education. Digital learning has emerged as a necessary source of educating students to cover the loss on an experimental basis. It is completely a new avenue of education that we had to adopt, transforming the concepts of traditional learning to digital learning. Almost all the educational institutions started looking towards different digital learning platforms to ensure uninterrupted learning journey of their students resulting in the significant rise of the demand for online learning platforms which will probably continue doing so in the future too.

### 1.1 Problem Statement

The global outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic has spread worldwide, affecting almost all countries and territories. The countries around the world cautioned the public to take responsive care. The public care strategies have included hand washing, wearing face masks, physical distancing, and avoiding mass gathering

and assemblies. Lockdown and staying home strategies have been put in place as the needed action to flatten the curve and control the transmission of the disease (Sintema, 2020). Under such scenario, the norms of education also changed from conventional face to face mode to online learning. But the problem is if this online learning would help the students in language learning since language learning differs with the other teaching methods of the core subjects that the undergraduate students learn in their course of study. This study focuses in identifying the impact of online education on language learning levels and performance levels of the students of under graduation.

## **1.2 Objectives of the study**

Since this transformation of conventional learning to online learning was implemented in the education field on a pilot basis to minimize the loss of education and due to minimal knowledge about the virtual platforms in teaching English, the system had to encounter many challenges in the ground reality. This paper hence throws light in examining the student's interest levels and challenges that they have encountered in language learning through online teaching.

## **2. Online Teaching**

Online learning is one of the imminent trends in the education sector around the globe using internet. Online education takes place outside the classroom through digital platforms. Online education is delivered in the form of lessons, animation, audio, video, and images. In the changing era, where everything has gone online, the field of education has also stood as not an exception.

Lockdown and social distancing measures due to the COVID-19 pandemic have led to closures of schools, training institutes and higher education facilities in most countries. There is a paradigm shift in the way educators deliver quality education—through various online platforms. The online learning, distance and continuing education have become a panacea for this unprecedented global pandemic, despite the challenges posed to both educators and the learners. Transitioning from traditional face-to-face learning to online learning can be an entirely different experience for the learners and the educators, which they must adapt to, with little or no other alternatives available. The education system and the educators have adopted “Education in Emergency” through various online platforms and are compelled to adopt a system that they are not prepared for.

E-learning tools have played a crucial role during this pandemic, helping schools and universities facilitate student learning during the closure of universities and schools (Subedi, 2020). While adapting to the new changes, staff and student readiness needs to be gauged and supported accordingly. The learners with a fixed mind-set find it difficult to adapt and adjust, whereas the learners with a growth mind-set quickly adapt to a new learning environment. There is no one-size-fits-all pedagogy for online learning. There are a variety of subjects with varying needs. Different subjects and age groups require different approaches to online learning (Doucet, 2020). Online learning also allows physically challenged students with more freedom to participate in learning in the virtual environment, requiring limited movement (Basilaia & Kavadze, 2020).

The use of suitable and relevant pedagogy for online education may depend on the expertise and exposure to information and communications technology (ICT) for both educators and the learners. Some of the online platforms used so far include unified communication and collaboration platforms such as Zoom, Microsoft Teams, Google Classroom, Canvas and Blackboard, which allow the teachers to create educational courses, training and skill development programmes (Petrie, 2020). They include options of workplace chat, video meeting and file storage that keep classes organized and easy to work. They usually support the sharing of a variety of content like Word, PDF, Excel file, audio, videos and many more. These also allow the tracking of student learning and assessment by using quizzes and the rubric-based assessment of submitted assignments.

The Government of India has launched the 'Bharat Padhe Online' Campaign to reduce the loss in education in this era of the Covid-19 Pandemic, which underscores the growing importance of online education. Despite the practical drawbacks along with the benefits of online education, the importance of online education will continue to increase in the present as well as in the future. Hence it needs to be adopted carefully.

### **2.1 Some of the advantages and challenges of Online Learning**

- ❖ Online teaching and learning platform provides number of tools such as videos, PDFs, podcasts and so on. This enables a teacher to extend her/his lesson plan beyond the traditional books to include online resources and help him/her to reach the students more efficiently.
- ❖ Online lectures can be recorded, archived, and shared for future reference. This allows the students to access the learning material at any time of their comfort and at any location of their choice. Hence, there are fewer chances of students missing out on their lessons.
- ❖ Paperless learning environment, no transportation charges and food has reduced the financial costs and made online education more affordable when compared to physical learning.
- ❖ Since every student has a different learning journey and a different learning style, using different options and resources available on online platforms, it is possible to create a personalized learning environment identifying the needs of the student.
- ❖ One of the greatest challenges of online learning is the struggle focusing on the screens for longer periods of time. Increased onscreen time is the biggest concern of online learning which leads to health hazards.
- ❖ There is a more possibility of the student to be distracted and the teacher needs to keep their online class crisp, engaging and interactive to help them stay focused
- ❖ A major key challenge of virtual learning is internet connectivity. Inconsistent internet connection leads to lack of continuity in learning and is detrimental to the learning process.
- ❖ Minimal physical interactions between students, peers and their teachers often results in a sense of isolation which would demotivate them in learning process
- ❖ Online learning requires teachers to have a basic understanding of using digital forms of learning. However, this is not the case always. Very often, teachers have a very basic understanding of technology. Sometimes, they don't even have the necessary resources and tools to conduct online classes.

## **2.2 Impact of Online Teaching on Language Learning**

Sun, Tsai, Finger, Chen and Yeh (2008) define learner attitude as “learner impression of participating in e-learning activities through computer usage”. Learner’s attitude plays a significant role in online learning. Students are required to take more active role in their learning as online learning environment is not a teacher centred. Students may engage in online learning, control the learning time and procedures by themselves (Liaw, Huang and Chen, 2007). Ho and Kuo (2010) argue that learner’s computer attitudes play a significant role in the usability of online learning. Prior studies have shown that attitude and self efficacy have been identified as important factors that affect learner’s motivation, interest and performance in internet based learning environments (Peng, Tsai and Wu, 2006). Sun et.al (2008) cited Piccoli et al. (2001) finding stated that when learners are not afraid of complexity in information technology (positive attitude), learner will become more satisfied and effective in online learning. Their review also finds that attitude influences learning interest (Hanaffin & Cole, 1983). Learner attitude toward online learning also depend on system characteristic. Pituch and Lee (2006) from their empirical studies indicate that learners have greater intention to use the system if the system is user friendly. As noted by Selim (2007), learner attitude to engage in online learning is also related to student’s previous knowledge in using computer. In addition, learner attitude toward internet is also important to determine learner’s motivation, interest and performance in online learning environment (yang & Lin, 2010).

Following research from Liaw et.al (2007), there are three aspects of learner attitude that link to online learning environment. Broadly identified challenges with e-learning are accessibility, affordability, flexibility, learning pedagogy, life-long learning and educational policy (Murgatrottd, 2020). Many countries have substantial issues with a reliable Internet connection and access to digital devices. While, in many developing countries, the economically backward children are unable to afford online learning devices, the online education poses a risk of exposure to increased screen time for the learner. Therefore, it has become essential for students to engage in offline activities and self-exploratory learning.

The innately motivated learners are relatively unaffected in their learning as they need minimum supervision and guidance, while the vulnerable group consisting of students who are weak in learning face difficulties. Some academically competent learners from economically disadvantaged background are unable to access and afford online learning. The level of academic performance of the students is likely to drop for the classes held for both year-end examination and internal examination due to reduced contact hour for learners and lack of consultation with teachers when facing difficulties in learning/understanding (Sintema, 2020).

There are varieties of online infrastructure that have been prepared by many educational firms and made free for learning during this pandemic. The affordability and accessibility to these online infrastructures for all the learners of varied economic backgrounds are still a challenge. As all students’ assignments and examinations are carried out from home, it is challenging for educators to find the authenticity of the work and the actual learning taking place.

### 3. Methodology

This study was conducted by sending invitation of participation to 310 students, for which 200 students from 10 different autonomous engineering colleges of Central Andhra Pradesh, affiliated to Jawaharlal Nehru Technological University, Kakinada responded expressing their willingness to participate in the survey. These 200 students belong to different streams of engineering studying in from 2<sup>nd</sup> years to 4<sup>th</sup> year of their engineering program. The questionnaire was developed with 20 aspects affecting the language learning and student's performance. It was constructed on five Likert-scale and closed-ended, having options Strongly Disagree (SD), Disagree (D), Neutral (N), Agree (A), and Strongly Agree (SA). This questionnaire was distributed to 200 students of various disciplines of Engineering through Google forms, after obtaining their consent to participate in the survey. A quantitative as well as qualitative analysis was made on experimental approach for this study.

#### 3.1 Data Analysis and Data Interpretation

Table: 01 Responses to questionnaire on impact of online learning on language learning

Sr No	Question	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
1	Students are compelled to learn on online mode in the pandemic	8	36	18	66	72
2	Face to face teaching is better than Online Teaching	16	10	12	64	98
3	Online Teaching can be helpful only in particular circumstances	8	8	20	124	40
4	Online Teaching is carried out without any interruption	44	52	8	68	28
5	Audio-video quality is satisfactory for online learning	68	38	16	64	14
6	Every student has facility to avail virtual lectures	22	44	8	66	60
7	Online Teaching fulfils language learning needs	18	56	12	42	72
8	The instructions of the teacher are easily understandable for the students in online learning	32	70	10	68	20
9	All the students actively participate in online learning	58	66	36	38	2
10	Students do not pay attention properly in online learning	8	30	12	98	52

11	Teaching material is relevant for online learning	24	76	2	86	12
12	Teacher -student interaction is satisfactory in online learning	56	58	8	54	24
13	Students face behavioural problems in online learning	20	28	16	82	54
14	Online Assessment System facilitated improving my language skills	72	52	12	56	8
15	Students were able to perform better in online assessment methods	48	36	10	84	22
16	Online learning enables best performance by the students	68	56	6	46	24
17	Ethical rules are observed in online learning	76	40	10	62	22
18	Online teaching ensures ease of learning language	80	56	12	42	10
19	Online teaching is best for ESL (English as Second Language) learning	70	36	10	72	12
20	Online teaching ensures quality learning	82	68	14	30	6

All 200 students participated and responded to the questionnaire and in response to the first statement 72 students strongly agreed, 68 students agreed, 18 students were not able to decide 36 students disagreed and 8 of them strongly disagreed which implied that majority of them opine that they are compelled to learn on online mode in the Pandemic situation.

Student's response to the second statement was highly positive and it shows that most of the students believed in face to face teaching when compared to online teaching. 98 students strongly agreed, 64 students agreed, 12 students were undecided, 10 of them disagreed and 16 of them strongly disagreed.

In response to the statement No 3, majority of the students agreed with the statement. 40 students strongly agreed, 124 agreed, 20 were neutral, 8 disagreed and other 8 strongly disagreed with the statement inferring that online teaching can be helpful only in particular circumstances.

Student's response to the statement No 4 was a mixed response. 28 students strongly agreed, 68 of them agreed, 8 were neutral, 52 disagreed and 44 totally disagreed. This implies that online teaching has a consistent problem with the technology and it has been a challenge in carrying it out without any interruption.

Response to the statement No 5 is again a mixed response making it clear that Audio-Video quality for online learning is not completely satisfactory. 14 students strongly agreed, 64 students agreed, 16 of them were neutral, 48 students disagreed and 68 totally disagreed.

Majority of the student's response to the statement No 6 was positive. 60 students strongly agreed, 66 students agreed, 8 of them were neutral, 44 students disagreed and 22 students totally disagreed. This states that most of the students have the facility to avail the virtual lectures.

Responses to the statement No 7 were satisfactory since half of the students responded positively to the statement. 72 students strongly agreed, 42 students agreed, 12 of them couldn't decide, 56 of the students disagreed and 18 totally disagreed with the statement.

In response to the statement No 8 the students had given a mixed response again. 20 of them strongly agreed, 68 students agreed, 10 of them did not respond, 70 students disagreed and 32 students totally disagreed with the statement. This response results in stating that there was a difficulty in following the teacher in online learning.

A few students responded positively to the statement No 9. 2 students strongly agreed, 38 of them agreed, 36 students remained neutral, 64 students agreed and 56 students strongly disagreed with the statement. This draws the conclusion that the student participation in the online learning is less.

Majority of the students stated that the students do not pay attention in online learning for which the reasons may be different. 52 students strongly agreed, 98 agreed, 12 of them didn't respond and stayed neutral, 30 students disagreed and 8 of them strongly disagreed to the statement No 10.

Response to the statement No 11 again is a mixed response. 12 students strongly agreed, 86 students agreed, 2 of them remained neutral, 76 of the students disagreed and 24 of them strongly disagreed. Most of the students are satisfied with the teaching material provided in online learning.

Most of the students expressed that the teacher-student interaction in online learning is not much satisfactory. 24 students strongly agreed, 54 students agreed, 8 of them were neutral, 58 disagreed and 56 of them strongly disagreed with the statement No 12.

In response to the statement No 13, 54 students strongly agreed, 82 agreed, 16 undecided, 28 disagreed, and 20 students have strongly disagreed. The majority of the students agreed that online teaching brings an emotional and behavioural change in students.

Majority of the students opined that online assessment system couldn't help them improving their language skills. In response to the statement No 14, 8 students strongly agreed, 56 of them agreed, 12 students were neutral, 52 students disagreed and 72 of the students strongly disagreed.

In response to the statement No 15, 22 students strongly agreed, 84 students agreed, 10 were neutral, 36 disagreed and 48 strongly disagreed with the statement. The responses suggested that most of the students were convenient and could perform better in the online assessment methods.

Most of the students were against the statement No 16. They opined that their performance in the language is not to the best of their abilities in online mode of learning. 24 students strongly agreed, 46 students agreed, 6 were neutral, 56 of the students disagreed and 68 students strongly disagreed with the statement.

Response to the statement No 17 was also a mixed response. 22 students strongly agreed, 64 students agreed, 10 of them were undecided, 26 students disagreed and 58 of them strongly disagreed with the statement.

In response to the statement No 18, 10 students strongly agreed, 42 students agreed, 12 were neutral, 56 of them disagreed and 80 students totally disagreed with the statement. Most of the students opined that ease of language learning is not ensured in online teaching.

Responses received for the statement No 19 show that students do not believe that online teaching is best for ESL learning. 12 students strongly agreed, 72 students agreed, 10 of them were neutral, 36 students disagreed and 70 students strongly disagreed to the statement.

In response to the statement No 20, 6 students strongly agreed, 30 students agreed, 14 students were neutral, 68 disagreed and 82 students totally disagreed with the statement. It is very much evident through the responses received to this statement that students strongly opined that online teaching does not ensure quality learning.

## **Conclusion**

The results of the study revealed that students preferred studying in the class room compared to online learning. The study observed that the major constraint of online learning is consistent internet signals. In spite of these issues, students enjoyed it since it is a new and happy experience in the pandemic period without affecting their studies. Students also expressed their satisfaction in the teaching material provided. But at the same time they opined that online learning has a great impact on their studies leading to a decline in their learning levels and performance levels of the language. Some of the reasons that they have conveyed for the declination are online learning couldn't provide the student-teacher interaction to the extent required and also it couldn't retain the motivation levels of the students all through. It is only due to compulsion and need based situation under pandemic COVID-19 scenario that the students have opted for online learning and is in favour of it. The study also revealed that the teachers should adopt more teaching techniques and provide a variety of activities to stimulate student's interest levels and to sustain their motivational levels in language learning. The prevailing conditions, with these experiences of online learning, have created a new opportunity for the "Blended Classroom", where learning is done using both offline and online methods and techniques of teaching. The possibility of incorporation of augmented reality into the blend can be incorporated in the ordinary learning environment of the classroom, resulting in the delivery of education to the students in a more holistic and interesting mode in the future.



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