

Unlocking Technology for Language Learning: A Viability at the Time of Transition from Traditional to Online Teaching and Learning

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Abstract

Online teaching and learning activities are no longer ‘a nice-to-have extracurricular facility’ but an answer to what, how, when people learn, and where they learn it from. Digitization of education helps us to find answers to how technology can enable teachers and students to access specialized materials outside the classroom, in various formats and ways that help to utilize both time and space. Educators all over the world are trying to overcome the limitations of being physically separated by moving onto online learning platforms. This paper attempts to find out the feasibility of using technology for teaching language to learners of English as a second language in the present-day context. The findings of this research are based on responses to a questionnaire answered by both the Language teachers and the Undergraduate students of Middle East College, Muscat and through literature review. Gen Z, the ‘digital natives’ do not want teachers to be replaced entirely by computers as they need motivation, inspiration, and emotional support. Virtual education is feasible, but its success depends upon the effective content generation, designing and planning for its delivery, and the effective use of teaching/learning tools that can supplement the efforts of the teachers. For online teaching and learning not only do the colleges and educational institutions need to be well-equipped, the learners also need to adapt to the changing scenario.

Keywords: asynchronous learning, digitization, Omani context, online learning platforms, teaching and learning tools, virtual education

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Introduction

With the immense popularity of Internet and the progress of network technologies online teaching / learning, referred to by some as Distance learning, has become the need of the hour. Online teaching and learning that takes place anywhere by the students in a synchronous or asynchronous environment using electronic devices like mobiles, laptops (Singh & Thurman, 2019) is gaining immense popularity. In fact, the pandemic caused by COVID-19 has challenged the education system worldwide to shift to online mode. Academic institutions that were reluctant or just mulling over to change their traditional pedagogical approach had no option but to shift entirely to online mode overnight (Dhawan, 2020). Technology is being very successfully used for the benefit of teachers and learners by reaching far-flung corners of the world, in the process eliminating time and distance barriers. These online courses are being offered by practically all the schools, colleges, and universities around the world in courses ranging from all school subjects to business to education to nursing, to name a few. Communication has never been so easy, technology has become not only the tool of human development but also the source of agency in the educational process (Sarica & Cavus, 2009).

The whole world is witnessing a revolution in technology but one cannot overlook the skepticism about the success of online Language learning. English Foreign Language (EFL) students belong to varied backgrounds, possess multiple achievement levels and have diverse learning styles, which impact their ability to learn and use the foreign language. Traditionally the learners see the expressions of their teacher and pick up the nuances of the language by being in close contact with each other. With the use of technology students can learn English faster and use it to express their feelings. But is it the only alternative in the present-day context? The aim of this research is to find out how online teaching and learning of language can be made feasible and how to use technology as an alternative. The methods used for research are literature review and an online questionnaire answered by staff and students involved in teaching/learning EFL. English language teachers have to be aware of the global context to make students engage within the current era and to increase students' competency to use the language they have learned. (Brown, Lauder & Ashton, 2008). Digitization has led to the restructuring of the whole educational landscape, and now we need to see the feasibility of online language learning.

Citizens need to be educated in this interconnected world. Successful people in the coming decades need to be able to understand this interrelatedness and navigate across boundaries to leverage their differences and work in a globally collaborative way. Educational institutions should focus on removing barriers to access and connectivity, supporting professional development, accelerating E-learning innovations, promoting digital literacy to implement lifelong learning. The role of educators need to be redefined and move towards facilitating young people's development as contributing members of society. "The COVID-19 pandemic has resulted in educational institutions across the world being compelled to suddenly harness and utilize the suite of available technological tools to create content for remote learning for students in all sectors"(Luthra & Mackenzie 2020). Educators across the world are experiencing new possibilities to do things differently and with greater flexibility resulting in potential benefits inaccessibility to education for students across the world.

Literature review

Tichavsky, Hunt, Driscoll, & Jicha (2015) conducted research to find out the perception of students on online versus face-to-face methods of instructions. In their article, they aimed to find out the reasons why students may or may not prefer online instructions; and whether these preferences were shaped by other students' perceptions of online learning or was it because of actual experience with online courses. The number of courses being offered online has seen a steady increase due to the advances in technology that has made the implementation of online courses easier as well as cost-effective. Despite this increase, students still seem to prefer face-to-face teaching and learning. This study was conducted by the researchers through reviewing existing literature and conducting a survey of the undergraduate students who were enrolled in online courses as well as in the traditional face-to-face classes.

According to the literature that was reviewed, it was found that since the projected college enrollment was going to increase, many institutions offered online courses to meet student demands. Online enrollment in courses was not constrained by physical space; it was a good alternative for on-campus students. Another reason for adopting online education by the institutions was the balance between self-paced, self-directional and collaborative learning. It was also observed that students performed better in these online courses if the course content was designed and taught according to strong pedagogical principles, and the students were satisfied by the methods of instructions adopted. One of the unique challenges presented by the online classes was the replication of effective communication that occurred in traditional classrooms. Computers sometimes could increase misunderstandings which is why researchers have stressed that the physical separation of the instructor and student in online classes should not be compromised. This can also have an effect on students' motivation. A survey of the students enrolled in both online and on-campus courses was also taken which revealed that the preference of students depended on three parameters: (i) A desire for face-to-face **Interaction** with both the teacher and their peers; (ii) Constant reminders from the teacher for completing a task and face-to-face interaction proved to be a great **Motivation** and (iii) In a face-to-face contact with the teacher, students felt a **Comfort in Familiarity** and viewed online learning as impersonal.

A SWOC (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Challenges) analysis on online teaching and learning has been presented by Dhawan (2020) where she says that "These strengths of the online learning modes can rescue us from these hard times." The e-learning methods are not only student-centered; they enable the planners and educators to customize the teaching processes according to the needs of the learners environment. The Educators can succeed in maintaining a human touch by using audios, videos along with lectures and provide instant feedbacks to the students. "The *Anywhere-Anytime* feature of e-learning is beneficial in the times of crisis-like situation,,..."(Dhawan 2020) "Technology provides innovative and resilient solutions at times of crisis to combat disruption and helps people to communicate and even work virtually without the need of face-to-face interaction. This leads to many system changes in organizations as they adopt new technology for interacting and working" (Mark & Semaan, 2008). One of the greatest weaknesses of online learning is the lack of communication between the teachers and the learners. All learners have different learning styles because of which inadequate customization of learning material can lead to frustration among the learners. This crisis of COVID-19 has presented many

opportunities where teachers can design various programs which in turn can enhance problem-solving skills, critical thinking abilities, and adaptability among the students. The EdTech Start-ups are trying to radicalize not only teaching and learning but also the process of evaluation, assessment, results, certification, degrees etc. Online teaching and learning also faces many challenges ranging from issues related to contents, learners and the educators. It is quite challenging to create content that not only covers the course content but also creates an interest among the learners. For teachers it is a challenge to move from traditional method of teaching to online teaching. For the learners it is a challenge to move towards a mode of studies where there is no face to face interaction.

An effective and efficient educational system needs to be developed to impart education via online mode. Since majority of the students prefer face-to-face classes to online classes regardless of whether they had taken an online course or not because they believed that it lacked social interaction with their peers and more importantly with the teachers. Many online courses adopt various methods to create an interactive online environment but the students seemed to miss the physical aspect of human interaction. Electronic interaction, no matter how frequent, may not be filling that aspect of the students' needs for social interaction. Another belief of the students was that in online classes they would have to 'teach themselves', and in the absence of the instructor they will not be able to ask questions nor ask for help from the instructor personally. They viewed themselves as poor self-motivators and relied on teachers for it. Majority of the students dislike reading and rely on verbal cues to determine what was important to read or study. In online courses, the absence of such cues from the teacher may cause the student to feel that they must read more of the assigned material. Getting the students to read is a constant battle (some of them may not have the skills required for self-regulated/self-directed learning), and the ultimate goal now is to help students develop skills to become self-regulated learners. E-learning or online learning is lot more difficult that it may seem. Quite a large amount of investment is needed for getting the devices and equipment, maintaining the equipment, training the human resources, and developing the online content.

Methods

The proponents of synchronous /asynchronous learning argue that online learning is easily accessible, relatively cheaper than institution-based learning in terms of the lower cost of transportation, accommodation, etc. It is flexible, as a learner can schedule or plan his/her time of completion of the course. Students can learn anything, anytime and anywhere that makes learning a life-long process. The content and format of an online course is easily updated to keep up with the ever-changing times. This study presents the perceptions, and preferences of students and teachers about online teaching and learning and the feasibility of adopting it in the context of EFL learners. An online survey was conducted through a questionnaire shared with the staff and students involved in online teaching and learning in Middle East College (MEC), Muscat, Oman. The respondents are from the General Foundation Programme offered at MEC and some undergraduate students who are studying English modules offered to various specializations at MEC. Middle East College has been following Flipped learning as an umbrella approach for all its teaching / learning processes for the last four years. MEC was one of the colleges in the Sultanate that immediately switched to online form of teaching and learning after the closure of all on-campus activities due to COVID-19. This survey was voluntary and was implemented only

after the Spring semester for the year 2020 was completed. The questionnaire consisted of 13 closed ended questions and two open-ended questions. Of the 46 respondents, 30 were students and 16 were teachers and 24 were females, and 22 were males.

Findings

The questions in the online survey ranged from the effectiveness of online learning to the opinion of the students about the future of it. Since the teachers and the students were experiencing this mode of teaching and learning for the first time, some of the results provide true insight. The results of some of the most relevant questions are as follows:

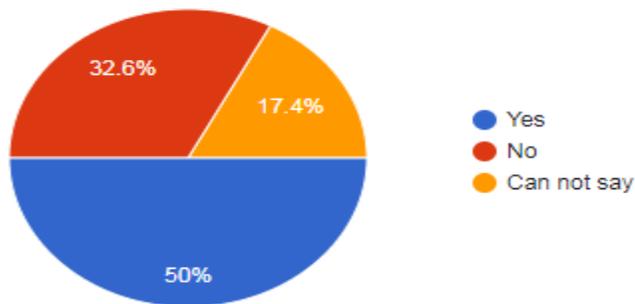


Figure 1. Online teaching and learning is interesting

Views about online teaching/learning

It is not always necessary to give students a very serious atmosphere in the class. The use of light hearted videos or in-class online activities can create an interest in the subject. Since the college had switched over to online mode of teaching/learning and the students and staff had already been engaged in it for a whole semester they were in a good position to answer this question. The teachers used some fun filled videos and conducted some online games, which made the class interesting. As the results show (in figure one), 50 % found it interesting and 17.4 % were undecided and only 32.6% did not find it interesting. It is evident that in general, the respondents found online classes interesting.

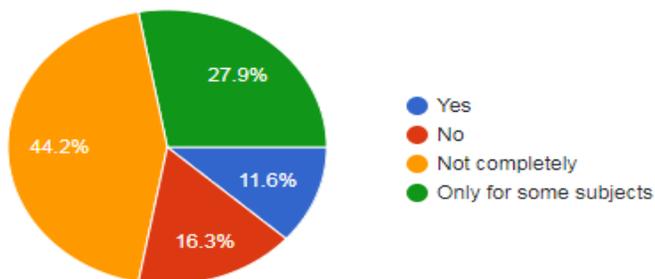


Figure 2. Replacing Traditional form of Teaching / Learning with Modern form of Teaching / Learning

Online teaching / learning an alternative to traditional form of teaching

The responses to this question were quite interesting. As seen in figure two, only 11.6% percent fully agreed that online teaching/learning is an alternative to traditional form of teaching but a good number, 44.2% opined that it cannot be replaced completely. Courses that need practical experience cannot be taught fully online. Theoretical parts can be done online but when it comes to ‘learning by doing’ traditional education is the only recourse.

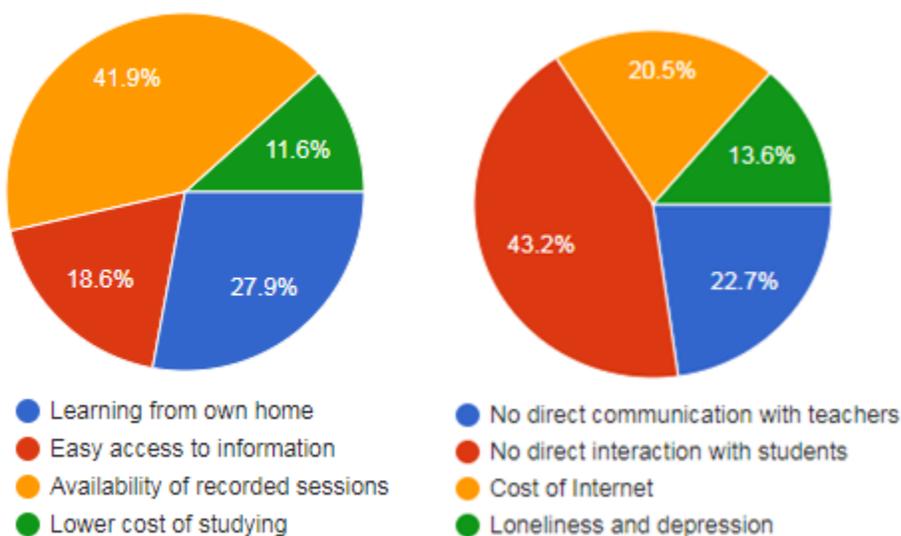


Figure 3. Advantages and Disadvantages of online Teaching / Learning

Advantages and Disadvantages of online teaching/learning

The biggest advantage of online teaching / learning, as seen in figure three, is the availability of recorded sessions. In the traditional form of teaching if a student is not able to attend the session he entirely misses the information about the topic discussed. Whereas in the online sessions since all the sessions are recorded and the videos/audios are easily accessible, the students do not miss anything about what has been discussed. Studying from the comfort of home is another big advantage. As discussed in the previous section, the biggest deterrent for students against opting for online teaching-learning is lack of interaction. As seen in figure three, 65.9% (43.2 % + 22.7%) conform to this view. Another issue faced by the students is the availability of internet connections, costly data packs, etc. These create stress for students and teachers alike. Many students are unable to attend regular online classes because of non-availability/poor connectivity of the network.

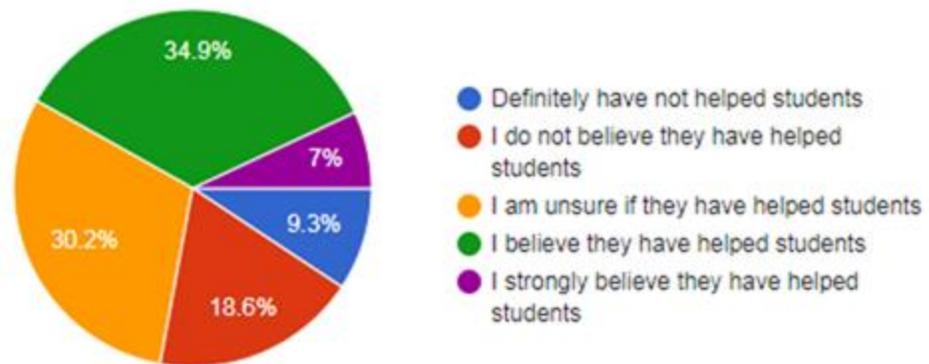


Figure 4. Online Teaching / Learning Tools help to Improve Grades

Improving Grades through Online Teaching/Learning

Majority of the respondents believed that the online tools help the students to improve their performance. 41.9% either strongly believed or believed that the online teaching / learning methods have given better results. The ultimate aim of any student is to improve his/ her performance and pass with good grades. Digitization of education is definitely helping in this area.

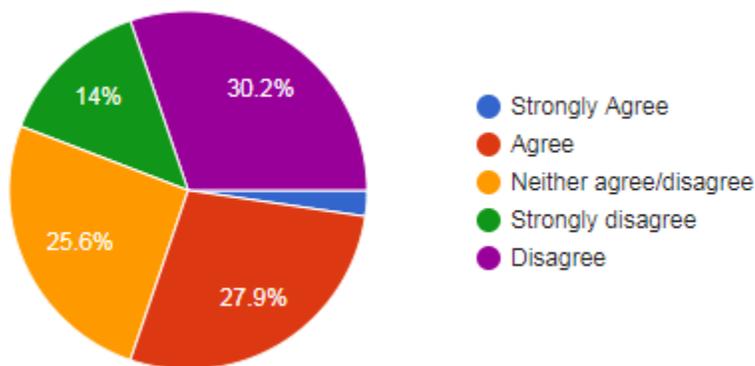


Figure 5. Easy to Pass a Course on the Internet without Teacher's Assistance

It is easy to pass a course on the internet without any teacher's assistance

For this question the respondents felt that assistance from teachers (who are great facilitators), is required in many areas to pass a module/course. It is not possible for a student to get a good result just because he has taken a course online. Nearly 44.2 % disagreed or strongly disagreed about the negligible role of teachers. Though online classes can help the students to become independent learners, a teacher-less class is unimaginable. As shown in figure five only 1.5 % strongly agree to this point, others feel the presence and guidance of a teacher is very important.

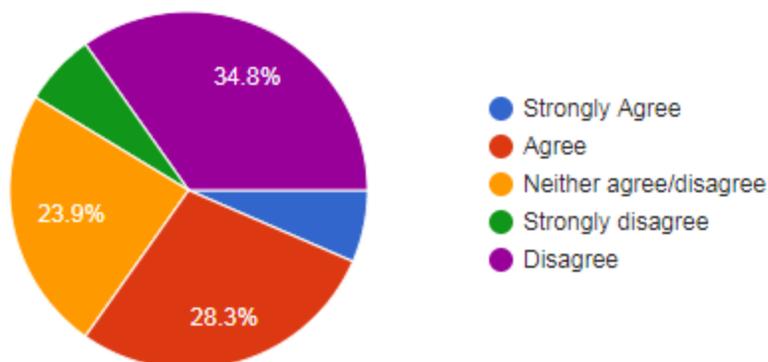


Figure 6. A Complete Course can be given through Internet without any Difficulty

No Difficulty in providing a complete course online

Since 28.3 % respondents agreed to it and 23.9 % were not very certain, it shows that conducting a complete course through internet is possible. Success of online courses is due to the care which is taken while designing a course and the method of its delivery. Online pedagogy frequently involves consultation and collaboration with a host of support personnel like instructional designers, web programmers, graphic designers, etc., and librarians, who provide subject-specific research assistance to online students. In effect, they help create an instructional system where any course can be given online and easily completed by the students. The responses as shown in Figure six very clearly corroborates the findings as discussed above.

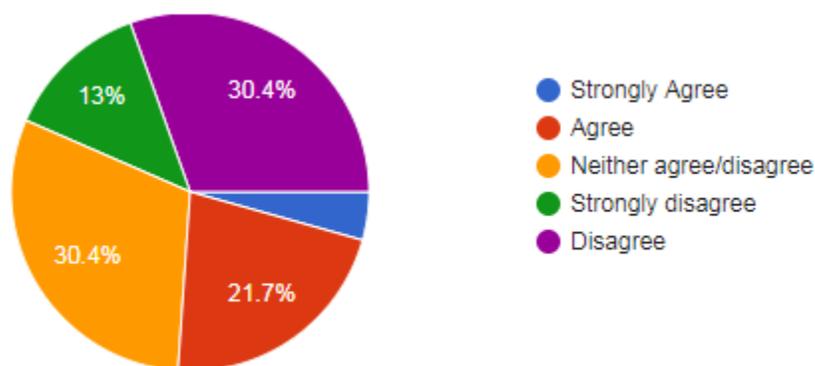


Figure 7. Online Teaching / Learning is Possible but it would be difficult to Learn English Online.

Difficulty in Learning English Language Online

The EFL teachers do their best in today's demanding educational atmosphere related to the use of technology and looking at the needs of the students. These EFL learners are not simply interested in achieving a command in the English language, they are also concerned with the acquisition of the formal academic skills demanded at various college and university levels. The EFL classroom needs to move away from traditional methods and focus incorporating new

approaches aimed at integrating content, culture, technology, and lifelong skills. From the responses as seen in the figure above it is clear that though some are not sure of the answer majority disagreed that language cannot be taught online. It is very encouraging to see that majority were of the opinion that language can be taught online with a little innovation in their teaching methodology.

Discussion

Advantages and Disadvantages of Teaching Beyond Classroom

“The next big killer application for the Internet is going to be education. Education over the Internet is going to be so big it is going to make e-mail usage look like a rounding error.” - John Chambers, CEO Cisco, 1999 (Fedynich 2013). The exponential growth of online education is being revered as an extraordinary change in the way education is delivered. Online teaching/learning, which is synonymous to distance learning, needs to be scrutinized by considering its advantages and disadvantages to assess its viability and feasibility in the present context. The **Advantages** of are as follows:

Flexibility and Convenience:

Online teaching/learning allows students to study at their own pace and convenience i.e. the anytime, anywhere nature, rather than being constrained by the scheduled meeting time for the class. Asynchronous online courses allow more flexibility for students to choose the times when they are productively engaged in learning activities (Daymont, Blau, & Campbell 2011). Because of work or travel schedule, or distance from campus, it may be impossible for some students to take a traditional classroom course. They might be having competing demands on their limited time, i.e. have work commitments, which imply less time spent on campus (Wdowik 2014).

Participation:

Participation of students increases in the asynchronous environment, and they engage in deeper educational experiences and broaden their academic capabilities (Wdowik 2014). Teaching online offered via the Internet can take many forms, ranging from Web pages to mailing lists to course management systems such as Blackboard. Students can interact in real-time in chat rooms or asynchronously by posting to bulletin boards or forums. “Introverts, who are quiet in the face-to-face class, really show more participation online”, (Fedynich 2013, p 1-7).

Hybrid/Blended Courses:

There are a blend of various forms of learning activities like classroom learning experiences, e-learning/forms of e-learning or a combination of all of these. This meets the needs of students who prefer face-to-face as well as online teaching and learning. Blended courses incorporate the best practices of in-class teaching and online teaching/learning. Students’ performance as well their retention rate also improves.

Cost Effectiveness:

Universities have observed that because of the adoption of blended learning approach the student population increases and the withdrawal rate decreases and it is cost effective. The requirement of physical space does not increase much so the cost of utilities and up-keep reduces. For the students Learning is delivered directly to the learner instead of the other way around’

(James). There are various courses that can be chosen from, which might be cheaper and affordable.

Even though there is a positive spin being endowed on online teaching / learning, there are certain complications that need to be brought to light. ‘If not properly understood, anticipated and prepared for, these **Disadvantages** can prove to be formidable obstacles’ (Fedynich 2013, p 1-7).

Computer Literacy:

Internet can prove to be an effective learning instrument, the students and teachers participating in an online course should possess a particular level of computer literacy. It’s a plain and simple fact. ‘Teachers resist the inconvenience of delivering lessons and navigating the Internet by adjusting to the technicalities of conducting classes mediated by a screen and a microphone’ (Kaur & Bhatt 2020). Laxity on the part of teachers and students in becoming computer literates is a big impediment in adopting online / teaching learning.

Online Access:

Along with computer literacy online access is a must for online learning. The lack of access either due to logistics or economic reasons, will be an impediment for the learners as well the instructors. This is a limitation for all online programs that are reliant on Internet access. Quality of transmission is another factor because often there is a network failure or poor access and the sound and picture get distorted which leads to frustration among the learners.

Course Design:

Designing an online course is not like developing a curriculum in a traditional education system. The curriculum developers should not only be knowledgeable of the subject area being taught but also about the new teaching skills to facilitate online interactions and assess the online learning of the students. More preparation time for online courses is required as compared to face-to-face course content.

Lack of Face-to-Face Interaction:

Different students have different learning styles. In online classes, the teacher is just a voice or an image. The idea of attending classes remotely without physical guidance of teachers and completing assignments all on their own does not appeal to many students. Students often lack discipline of autonomous learning skills and motivation to do self-study (Kaur & Bhatt 2020). Students do not receive the same kind of support and guidelines as in a traditional class. This can be a daunting experience for the students. Student assessment and feedback is also limited, though the Internet provides a wonderful means to get all kinds of information back and forth to your audience, but it also makes it harder to assess some types of student feedback and information (James n.d.).

Using Technology for Language Teaching /Learning

Nowadays all material is available on the internet so self-learning is more important than depending on teachers. To make students autonomous learners they have to rely on themselves to search for knowledge. Technology will help students learn faster and easier to find answers to their queries and even the availability of teachers online is better and not time-bound. Starting from

basics with activity-based learning modules can be done effectively and learning can be reinforced through assessments. Reading and Listening skills are easier to deal with online as compared to Writing skills. Developing Writing skills through online teaching/learning would be a tough challenge. There are many useful websites which can be used by non-native learners to enhance their four language learning skills. It should be supported by in-class learning, effective and a robust video and audio system with constant teacher feedback. A majority of universities and educational institutes have already started to utilize technology within their teaching methods. When technology is integrated into lessons in ways that are aligned with good in-person teaching pedagogy, learning can be better than without technology. Technology-based learning programs come in different delivery modes and forms that are affecting the process of learning in many ways and for different purposes. Integrating technology into the classroom is an effective way to connect non-native learners of English with all learning styles. They can include online tools, such as discussion boards, e-mails, real time events, videoconferencing, and web conferencing. Technology in turn makes the students autonomous learners, who learn to rely on themselves in searching for knowledge. The implementation of an online learning community using interactive technology has unequivocally shown to have a positive impact on transactional engagement outside the classroom. When teachers use appropriate online technologies (student-centered) coupled with providing a supportive, productive, challenging, and safe environment (Wdowik 2014), students become more engaged in their learning process, leading to a greater and broader student experience. Teachers who are technologically competent and not resistant to adapt to change should explore the possibility of introducing different online learning tools.

Technology has become indispensable for language learning in the present day context not only for English but for other languages as well. Learning a language is easier if one is really motivated. Technology plays an important role in knowing phonic sound, pronunciation, elementary grammar, conversation and comprehension. Technological tools bring in a lot of variety that keep students engaged and make the learners tech-savvy. Students can improve their English language by using modern day technology, by surfing the internet, watching videos and using a lot of apps that facilitate language learning. Students can immediately search the web using their devices if a point is not clear. Students are more likely to learn more from electronic curricula than what the English language teachers teach. Through the use of interactive media, students tend to be less dependent on the written texts instead use the authentic cultural contents that they can be easily accessed. Even instructors prefer to employ modern technology rather than using traditional methods of instructions. In fact, the students' interaction with teachers and overall responsiveness of students in the classroom significantly improves when using modern techniques in English language teaching. If we take writing as a starting point, students can create a draft and based on feedback; they can make changes to improve the text. Technology makes it more likely that learners will engage with the editing process to produce the highest-quality text that they can. Technology can make anything better these days. The teacher needs to be enthusiastic, well prepared by providing stimulating activities and effectively conducting the online learning classes, sensitive to students' needs, have a positive attitude, welcome queries, and adequately respond to students questions, be accessible and provided a safe and productive online learning environment (Wdowik 2014). With the aid of technology a teacher can create a better and more effective instructional material that can not only facilitate language learning but also promote the target culture. Devices like smartphones, laptops and computers, PDAs, etc., can be widely used to

support student learning in a classroom setting, and open new vistas for language learning and teaching in particular. When technology-based activities are merged with an inquiry learning approach it allows students to interact directly with the second language and its culture in a timeless and open environment and explore and construct a deeper understanding of L2.

Teachers should use technology to support the curriculum so that learners make use of technology in learning their language skills. The use of computer technology leads to the improvement of teachers' teaching and learners' learning in the classes, but much depends on how teachers use it in their language classrooms. Technology-enhanced teaching environment is more effective than a lecture-based class making teaching interesting and more productive in terms of advancement. The use of online videos and activities involving internet usage provides learners a varied range of material to analyze and interpret. Technology also creates a student-centered learning atmosphere that enhances learners' responsibilities, provides them self-direction and encourages them to learn individually and to acquire responsible behaviors (Ahmadi 2018). The use of internet also increases learners' motivation. A combination of multimedia and teaching methodology is very important to attract learners' attention towards English language learning and to assist them in developing their higher order thinking skills. Teachers should also improve their ability to use new technologies for the development and delivery of instruction. Acquire knowledge about what tools are available for course development and delivery that will help in broadening an instructor's ability to prepare course materials and deliver them in creative, stimulating ways.

Integration of Technology in Language Learning

Teachers should implement a technology plan that considers integration strategies for learners to improve their language skills and teachers should change their attitude towards the use of technology. The planning must be closely aligned with the curriculum standards, educational approach and computer technology should be made an integral part of the learning activity through which skills are transferred to learners. Language teachers should urge their learners to use technology in developing their language skills and technology experts should provide extra assistance for teachers who use it in teaching their English courses. Teachers should find ways that technology can help them towards learner-centered instruction as opposed to teacher-centered instruction. Teachers should also be aware of their roles as guides and facilitators in order to integrate online language learning and technology. Training should also be provided for teachers from time to time to update them about advancement in technology that can be adopted for teaching and learning. Since technology is one of the important tools of language learning activity; it helps learners to improve their language learning skills teachers should encourage their learners to use technology in increasing their language abilities.

Conclusion

COVID-19 has forced the world to rethink about the mode of teaching and learning. Learning a language in the absence of the physical presence of a teacher is no more a challenge. As online education grows exponentially in popularity among educational programs, the deliberation of the strengths compared to the weaknesses is vitally important so as to be better prepared to cope with the challenges of working and/or learning in this environment. There has been a lot of evidence that teachers are actively collaborating with one another and at a local level.

There are unparalleled opportunities for cooperation, creative solutions, and willingness to learn from others and try new tools because educators, parents, and students are sharing similar experiences all at the same time. Many education related companies are offering their tools and solutions for free to help support teachers and students. Teachers need to be convinced of the usefulness and advantages of technology in improving learners' language acquisition. Use of various social applications (e.g., Facebook) and blogging (e.g., Twitter); mobile Internet access (browsing websites and reading news); use of multiple media (watching movies, listening to audio books, podcasts and vodcasts); location-based activities (using GPS to find a place); and user-created content (making a film, creating a podcast) allow language learners to maximize the opportunity to be exposed to L2 in meaningful and authentic contexts.. This leads to learners' construction of their own L2 cultural knowledge and increase opportunities for students to communicate in L2 not only within the classroom walls, but also outside the classroom. Blogs promote reading and writing, knowledge sharing, feedback and reflection, as well as cultural learning. By reading blogs written by native speakers, students can gain cultural understanding of different perspectives of L2 native speakers. There are a number of freely available blog publishing tools, such as LiveJournal, Edublogs, Blogger, etc., that can be adapted in a foreign language classroom. Blogs are powerful vehicles for self-expression and self-empowerment can enhance students' critical-thinking ability, literacy skills, as well as assist in using the Internet as a research tool. This means that teachers too need support and training for integrating technology into language teaching. The digital resources allow teachers to create new techniques, as well as reevaluate and improve the more traditional techniques that help bring the target culture into the classroom. Research has shown that language learning should occur in a dynamic and active manner; technology provides interaction between teachers and learners; it provides comprehensible input and output; helps learners to develop thinking skills; makes learning and teaching more student-centered; promotes learners' autonomy and helps them feel more confident, and increases learners' motivation to effectively learn a foreign language.

With the majority of institutions reporting online education as critical to their long-term strategy, it is now more important than ever that we consider ways to help students be successful in online delivery formats as well. Online courses present additional challenges for instructors in conveying a social presence in which students perceive them as "real" people, beyond the facilitation of the course. Additionally, online courses may prove especially challenging for students who do not have the skills for self-regulated learning. If online courses continue to be part of the long-term strategic plan for academic institutions, we need to consider how to teach students the skills they will need to become self-regulated learners. The ultimate goal is to create learning environments in which students are effective learners (Tichavsky, Hunt, Driscoll and Jicha 2015).

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