
Teaching Writing Courses through Online Education during COVID

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ABSTRACT: *In its Sustainable Development Goal 4 (SDG 4), it professes that Technology can adhere to Educational access to everyone, decrease the digital divide, supplement teachers with supporting aids, improve the quality of learning and the learner. With the current COVID situation, the teaching learning methodology has to be revamped. The present status of learning pedagogy among learners calls for immediate action. This demands a transition in the teaching and learning process. The face to face classroom teaching has been changed to online teaching. Students are no longer moving towards stationary buildings. They are immobile with technology transporting educational materials to their living rooms and bedrooms. This paper attempts to check whether Writing skill can be taught through online mode during this COVID crisis. A total of 300 students participated in the study. The main objective was to find out the effectiveness of teaching writing through online education. The findings revealed that the majority of students developed their writing skill to the proficiency level. The result of the study is that teachers can encourage students to learn writing through online mode and develop their proficiency level.*

KEYWORDS: teaching, writing courses, online education, COVID

INTRODUCTION

UNESCO states that “Information and Communication Technology (ICT) can complement, enrich and transform the society for the better.” In its Sustainable Development Goal 4 (SDG 4), it professes that Technology can adhere to Educational access to everyone, decrease the digital divide, supplement teachers with supporting aids, improve the quality of learning and the learner. With the current COVID situation, the teaching learning methodology has to be revamped. The present status of learning pedagogy among learners calls for immediate action. This demands a transition in the teaching and learning process. The face to face classroom teaching has been changed to online teaching. Students are no longer moving towards stationary buildings. They are immobile with technology transporting educational materials to their living rooms and bedrooms. Earlier the mode of teaching was traditional. The chalk and talk method was very dull. It was crucial to captivate the attention of the students. Hence, it was important to bring new technology into the classroom. With the onset of technology, PCs became an inevitable device. Day by day,

new advancements sought simpler mechanisms. Technology is considered to be more light weight compared to books, dictionaries and encyclopedias. The focus has shifted from the learner to the expertise of the teacher. Unlike earlier, the teacher is much more involved in the teaching process and the learner is less involved in the learning process.

Online Education

Online Education is “Any sort of learning that happens when the learner is not at a fixed, predetermined location, or learning that happens when the learner takes advantage of the learning opportunities offered by mobile technologies”. Online Education is the learning and knowledge sharing that takes place when the learner uses the laptop or mobile for the learning process. It is the combination of the usage mobile computing and e-learning. It is accessing resources wherever the person is, with strong search capabilities, rich interaction, powerful support for effective learning, and performance-based assessment. It is e-learning independent of location in time or space. Resistance to change will not help any educational unit across the world. They will be judged on their pace to adapt to the changes in such a short period and their ability to maintain the quality. (Shivangi Dhawan, 2020). Students can learn at their convenience which combines the formalities of classroom education to the informal personal connectivity to information. It allows information to travel with the user and requires little space. It aims to make learners more active in the learning process and not just passive receivers of information. Students are increasingly mobile in an environment where pervasive wireless broadband is emerging and enabling access to rich media communication and content. It helps match delivery to academic need. It develops independent learning skills.

Technology available in Online Education

1. SMS: Short Message Service allows users to send/receive messages of up to 160 characters between mobile phones (text messaging).
2. MMS: Multimedia Messaging Service serves the same purpose as SMS but allows the inclusion of graphics.
3. WAP: An international protocol that allows users to access the internet via their WAP enabled mobile phones.
4. GPRS: An always on internet connection for mobile devices that provides greater speed of connection (171kb/s).
5. Bluetooth: A short range wireless connection. This enables PDAs (Personal Digital Assistants) to pass messages to and from other mobile devices.
6. 3G and 4G phones: By the end of the decade 4G (4th Generation mobile phones) will provide up to 100 megabits per second transmissions adequate for multimedia.
7. PDAs: Personal Digital Assistants have evolved to mini PCs able to carry out many of the basic functions of a larger PC using the Palm OS or MS Pocket PC operating system.
8. MP3s: Audio file format that efficiently compresses files and enables them to be shared.
9. CAMs: Video cameras now embedded into mobile phone and PDAs.

ICT and Online Learning

The vision of mobile computing is that of portable computation with rich interactivity, total connectivity, and powerful processing. Mobile is a small device that is always networked which allows easy input through pens, speech and keyboard. It gives the students the ability to see high resolution images and hear quality sounds. The average mobile device will be a small handheld computer with a personally chosen suite of applications. Mobile learning focuses on the mobility of the learner and the interaction through portable technologies. It reflects how society and its institutions can accommodate and support an increasingly mobile population. It is convenient and accessible virtually from anywhere. It is strongly portable replacing books and notes with small memory cards. It is simple to utilize mobile learning for a more effective and entertaining experience. As an effect of size, students have a sense of privacy; communication is more expressive. It encourages learners to be flexible, participate in collaborative efforts, and develop multi-tasking skills. A research conducted by Feller and Apple (2006) states that using weblog would promote writing fluency because students can consider their vocabulary more and recycle it as well as notice their language use.

Teaching English as a Second Language

English is taught either as the Second Language or the Foreign Language to almost 90% of the world's population. It is the connecting language or the gateway to the world. Many students travel across the world for Higher Education. It is the language that provides employment opportunities all over the world.

Teaching Effective Writing

Of the four skills, Listening, Speaking, Reading and Writing (LSRW), Writing is last and the difficult skill. English is the language of the masses. The phonological pronunciation does not coincide with the spelling of the written word. Effective writing is a skill that is grounded in the cognitive domain. It involves learning, comprehension, application and synthesis of new knowledge (Joseph Defazio, 2010). So, it is a little difficult for the language learner to adapt the writing skill. It is the biggest challenge for the college students to write essays, projects and assignments. Often, they end up copying from the pre-written texts. As a result, many students fail in learning English as a Second Language. Several studies have shown that to improve writing, it is beneficial to train writing strategies and to support the writing process through feedback (Graham, 2006).

Objectives of the Study

The objective of the study was to find out the effectiveness of Teaching Writing through Online Education to undergraduate students of an ESL class during this COVID crisis. The study was conducted online through Google forms. The questionnaire was checked and corrected by the experts in Education. It was then circulated online and many students around the world participated in the study. Around 300 undergraduate students of an ESL class attended the entire questionnaire. This will focus on how students perceive online education and how fruitful is the education for the students. The results gathered will help the researcher leading towards the updation and use of technology in the classroom.

METHODOLOGY

This study was conducted in the descriptive-survey research design. It was used to identify the effectiveness of Teaching Writing to undergraduate students of an ESL class through Online mode. It involves the quantitative method so as to have an understanding of the student population. The primary data was collected from the students with the help of a questionnaire. The respondents attempted the questionnaire through Google Forms. The questionnaire had items. It was measured through Likert Scale. It had positive and negative marking. Descriptive analysis, Analysis of Variance and Correlation analysis were adopted. T-Test and r value were worked out.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Variables	N	Calculated 'r' Value	Table Value	Remark
Teaching Writing vs. Online Education	300	-0.286	0.114	S

It is inferred from the above table (4.39) that there is a significant relationship between Teaching Writing and Online Education. This may be due to the fact, students have slowly inclined towards technology at homes and during their leisure. Slowly, the television has replaced all outdoor hobbies involving the people to be drawn towards them. The colourful visual and the soulful music had people addicted to them. They like to while away their time in front of the television instead of learning new skills. This has led to the interest in computers, mobiles and assistive technology. When ICT was introduced in the classroom, it has captures the attention of all the students. With its ability to cater to students with special needs, it was welcomed by teachers as well as parents. There was no exception to ban ICT with the effects of COVID. It has become an irreplaceable mode of education and tries to keep students connected to the teachers even when they are in remote places. The mobile and online education has created a virtual platform for teachers to meet and share knowledge.

Significance of Online Education

The black board and the chalk did not captivate the students. ICT has brought in a colourful world that made learning an exciting experience. The new generation likes mobile devices such as PDAs, phones and games devices. Online Education has made learning possible anywhere and everywhere. There is no demographic boundary to the use of mobiles. It decreases the limitation of learning location with the mobility of general portable devices. It can be used as part of learning approach which includes different types of activities like blended learning. Students interact with instructors and among each other. It engages learners and increases motivation. These handheld devices increase the commitment of students towards learning. It initiates the performance and the relevance to the learner. Mobile Learning is collaborative. The sharing among everyone using the

same content is almost instantaneous. It leads to the reception of instant feedback and tips. It enables several students to work together on assignments even while at distant locations. Mobiles can be a useful add-on tool for students with special needs. The students can access documents or document libraries. They can also participate in lessons and tutorials, access quizzes and self-assessment as question or games. They can receive lectures archived or broadcasted live. They can access to video clip or audio libraries. They can participate in virtual learning communities on the board. They can read asynchronous postings which exhibit student work. Since handhelds are more affordable than larger systems, they are accessible to a larger percentage of the population. The mobile phone (through SMS notices) can be used especially for distance education or with students whose course requires them to be highly mobile to communicate information regarding availability of assignment results, venue changes and cancellations.

Online education has become increasingly popular among all sections of society. People, especially parents favour Online Education in contrast to Classroom Education because it nullifies the chance of COVID infection. It gives them complete control over their child's safety. This study tries to bridge the gap between the learning process and the learner. The availability of the material and lectures online and at feasible times make the learning more comfortable.

Critical Review of Online Education

The Connectivity is not accessible always and the battery life is not dependable. The Screen size is small and students find it difficult to view diagrams and pictures. Similarly, the keys are tiny and it gives a lot of strain to the fingers. It is a lot more difficult to use moving graphics. There is limited potential for expansion with some devices. Online learning supports only the learning process and is not an integral part of the learning process. It needs to be used appropriately, according to the groups of students involved. It can be used as a 'hook' to re-engage the drop – outs and bring them back to school. The lack of common hardware platform, makes it difficult to develop content for all. Multiple standards, multiple screen sizes and multiple operating systems should be made available. There is no method to assess learning outside the classroom. The information must be presented in small amounts, which requires it to be succinct. The devices become out of date quickly. Academic writing skill and coherence skill are multi-faceted which makes the assessment challenging. (Anke Wischgoll, 2017). The wireless bandwidth is limited and may degrade with a larger number of users. There are difficulties with printing, unless connected to a computer.

CONCLUSION

Online Education will be the face of Education. It is time for all the teachers to equip themselves to the needs of the society. Unless, the teachers try to blend technology in the classroom, it will be highly impossible for them to accommodate to the expectations of the students in the classroom. Students face a high level of difficulties in language learning in the classroom. There are certain advantages and disadvantages in Language Learning devoid of Classroom teaching. It boosts the confidence level of the students to fare better in Productive skills namely, Speaking and Writing. It allows them to think creatively without inhibitions of being mocked by their own classmates. In

order to achieve higher levels of writing performance, the working memory demands of writing processes should be reduced so that executive attention is free to coordinate interactions among them. (Ronald T. Kellogg, 2007). On the other hand, it gives little room for peer involvement and collaborative learning. The teacher must provide ample opportunities for the students to explore their writing talent and thereby improve their writing skills.

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