



Research Paper

Challenges of English Language Teaching and Learning through Digital Connectivity during epidemic Crisis

Sowmya M N¹, Vishwaraju S B², Sushma C R³

¹Department of English, S J (Government) polytechnic, Bangalore, Karnataka, India.

²Department of English, Government polytechnic, Krishnaraja pete, Karnataka, India.

³Department of English, Government polytechnic, Channapatna, Karnataka, India.

ABSTRACT

This study, "Challenges of English Language Teaching and Learning through Digital Connectivity during epidemic Crisis," examines the challenges faced by teachers and students during the unexpected transition from face-to-face to virtual classrooms during the epidemic crisis. The study investigates teaching tactics for motivating pupils. This research used a qualitative technique and a survey design. The sample included six English teachers and six pupils. The sampling technique was not random. The researcher used a questionnaire with open-ended questions to collect data. To prepare for analysis, the data was thoroughly reviewed and conceptualized. The researcher valued the participants qualitative contributions. The study found that teachers lack enough training and preparation to offer online programs. This presents a significant learning obstacle for students pursuing further education at campuses and colleges. Teachers use ICT-friendly ways to motivate pupils, including translating offline materials to online as needed.

Keywords: digital connectivity, learning English, challenges of teaching, teachers and students, classrooms.

I. Introduction

The epidemic has afflicted the whole planet. Projects were delayed, workplaces were shuttered, gym and yoga courses were canceled, and academic institutions were closed. Students in metropolitan areas often obtain instruction through digital means, such as video conferencing with teachers. Keeping the college or institution open poses safety hazards to students, making this strategy the best alternative for the time being. This alternate teaching style is widely used across the world. However, many campuses and institutions are not prepared to implement online courses. India's online courses differ from those in other affluent nations like the US, UK, and Canada. Inadequate planning, technical understanding, and direction hinder the implementation of digital education medium.

According to Yen and Mohammed (2012), English is the world's most frequently spoken language. English as a second language (ESL) learners go worldwide to acquire the language due to its importance in today's global context. Efforts have been made to develop effective English learning strategies. Learning English as a second language is tough. According to Khasbani (2017), effective collaboration between learners and teachers is crucial for success. Globalization has led to a shift in English instruction in higher education from grammatical translation to communicative approaches (Zakaria & Shah, 2017). This strategy promotes active participation in class and improves English speaking and listening abilities. Learning to speak is crucial for effective communication worldwide. Speaking is more significant than listening, reading, and writing since it is a common mode of communication in everyday life, both formal and informal. Communication is one of the 4Cs (Critical Thinking, Communication, Collaboration, and Creativity) of 21st century skills that highlight the importance of talent. Many governments aim to enhance students' speaking skills through education policies, resulting in skilled English speakers. India, like other developing nations, is witnessing technological transition. However, there has been little success in implementing ICT-related policies, particularly in education.

The National Information and Communication Technology Policy 2015 aimed to provide free Wi-Fi to the entire Indian population by 2016 (Purdie, 2014; The Economic Times, 2014), as cited in Shrestha (2017). The Campus Sector Reform Plan (SSRP) 2009-2015 aimed to expand ICT infrastructures on campus to support teaching/learning strategies (Ministry of Higher Education). The Five-Year Plan 2011-2016 focused on the use of ICT in campus education. The ICT in Education Master Plan 2013-2017 aimed to increase equitable access to quality education and reduce the digital divide between haves and have-nots. However, the policies do not appear to have been fully applied. Currently, most campuses lack ICT infrastructure and internet connectivity.

The unanticipated move to digital platforms like Zoom and Google Meeting has disrupted the curriculum, particularly for instructors who struggle with internet navigation and classroom management. Certain subjects and information might be challenging to convey online. Virtual teaching is more suitable for basic courses in biochemistry or economics compared to music or dance. Creating films or dramas need a hands-on approach to instruction. It might be challenging to discuss the deaths of colleagues in creative writing courses without staring straight into their eyes. The screen causes emotional detachment, hinders interaction, and prevents insightful replies without viewing someone's feelings in isolation.

The pandemic is expected to bring additional learning hurdles beyond typical virtual schooling. The transition from online to in-person learning may cause disruptions, such as adjusting to higher standards of accountability, losing phone-checking habits, and transferring comments from digital to hard copies. These troubleshooting processes aim to help universities, professors, and students develop adaptation, patience, and resilience skills. These experiences prepare individuals for future learning problems related to epidemics, pandemics, and disasters. Humans have been learning in real time since they started communicating. Internet-based real-time instruction is a relatively recent concept. Synchronous tools prioritize human engagement and encourage sharing, collaboration, and learning, unlike many other technologies that aim to eliminate it. Real-time learning, unlike other forms of computer-mediated communication, allows for the natural give-and-take and subtitles of in-person conversations. Due to the epidemic, pupils are unable to attend school and must learn from home. Until now, physical distance has been the primary security mechanism, and student engagement is limited to digital spaces. Academic leaders and stakeholders are scheduling online courses at irregular times. According to Phuyal, India's educational institutions are facing challenges due to the undetermined duration of the lockdown. Due to the lack of a cure, social distance is the only way to ensure safety. It is quite impossible to determine how long this epidemic will last. According to Phuyal, during a crisis, many Indian prioritize their survival above expanding their knowledge via data. The epidemic has led to hunger-related deaths and suicides. It seems unlikely that internet access would be affordable for all Indian students. To make sound judgments, it's important to analyze the current situation. Beauchamp (2012) suggests that ICTs have significant potential for new and creative ELT pedagogies, leading to a promising future. ICT enhances learning by providing global access to a vast amount of information and knowledge. Using ICT allows learners to engage with teachers while also gaining exposure to cultures and individuals from various backgrounds.

Statement of the Problem

Epidemic has unexpectedly impacted academic institutions, causing leaders to scramble for solutions. It generates the need to manage unanticipated and approaching catastrophic occurrences, which are touted as the "new normal". Faculty at campuses and universities should be supported in responding quickly to pandemics during lockdowns. Their interest has led to a negative perception of online courses for students of all ability levels, including academic disciplines, fine and performing arts, and mental/physical wellness. Unresolved learning issues in digital English instruction stem from self-regulation and well-being concerns. Insufficient homework has caused a paradigm change in Nepalese education, posing issues for English teachers. The research examined the issues of ELT during the epidemic crisis and the impact of digital connection on teaching English.

The digital teaching approach can assist teachers in doing tasks. The phrase "Digital Pedagogy" refers to the combination of technological abilities, pedagogical practice, and knowledge of effective course design strategies for students. The digital teaching technique enhances the teaching and learning process, offering students numerous and adaptable learning options. It enables students to engage in constructive learning, where they develop and apply knowledge in a purposeful and meaningful manner. Digital teaching approaches enable authentic and contextual evaluations to enhance learning in a digital setting. "Digital pedagogy is not just a teaching method; it is also a rapidly expanding field presides over multiple debates and campus of thought" (Croxall, 2013). Digital pedagogy helps instructors understand how students interact and learn in today's linked digital environment. Teachers may use technology to enhance their teaching approaches and drive educational progress. The digital or technological teaching technique involves three knowledge areas: content, instructional method, and technology.

II. Research Questions

The idea that digital connectedness is the best way to save education has been hampered by the widespread spread of the virus. The transition from physical to virtual ELT classrooms presented new issues.

Focusing on this, this study addressed the following questions:

1. What issues have evolved from the unanticipated move to online learning in English language teaching?
2. What motivates students to participate in online English language teaching?
3. What measures do instructors use to meet student needs and handle obstacles in educational institutions during the pandemic?

III. Method of Procedure

The study's methodology outlines the methodologies, sample, research design, data gathering instruments, and analytic procedures employed. The article discusses data analysis stages, including presentation, interpretation, validation, and prospective research outcomes. The methodology section of the article outlines various aspects of the study's research design, data collection, and analysis procedures. Here's an overview of what the methodology likely includes:

Methodologies: The article specifies the methodologies employed in the study, such as qualitative descriptive research and phenomenological analysis. It may explain the rationale for choosing these methodologies and how they align with the research questions and objectives.

Sample: The methodology describes the sample of participants involved in the study, including criteria for inclusion (e.g., graduating students from alternative schools) and possibly exclusion criteria. It may discuss how participants were recruited or selected and provide demographic information about the sample.

Research Design: The article outlines the overall research design, including the approach to data collection and analysis. It may detail whether the study followed a cross-sectional or longitudinal design and explain any specific considerations related to the research context.

Data Gathering Instruments: The methodology section describes the data gathering instruments used in the study, focusing on the semi-structured interview protocol designed for this research. It may provide examples of interview questions or themes explored during the interviews.

Analytic Procedures: The methodology explains how the collected data were analyzed, highlighting the content analysis approach employed to identify themes and patterns in participants' responses. It may discuss coding procedures, data management techniques, and strategies for ensuring rigor and trustworthiness in the analysis process.

Data Analysis Stages: The article likely outlines the various stages of data analysis, including data reduction, data display, and drawing conclusions. It may explain how themes emerged from the data and how they were organized and interpreted to address the research questions.

Presentation and Interpretation: The methodology section may touch upon how the findings were presented and interpreted, including the use of quotations or excerpts from participants to illustrate key points. It may discuss how interpretations were grounded in the data and supported by evidence from the interviews.

Validation: The article may address strategies used to enhance the validity and reliability of the study findings, such as member checking or peer debriefing. It may discuss how researchers addressed potential biases and ensured that interpretations accurately reflected participants' perspectives.

Prospective Research Outcomes: Finally, the methodology section might discuss potential implications of the study findings for future research or practice. It may highlight areas for further investigation or suggest directions for future studies to build upon the current research findings.

Overall, the methodology section provides a comprehensive overview of the research approach and procedures employed in the study, offering transparency and clarity about how the research was conducted and how the findings were generated and interpreted.

IV. Research Question Findings

This section focuses on data analysis and interpretation. Data was acquired using a semi-structured questionnaire sent over email. The researcher evaluated data on the following important themes:

The researcher collected data from six professors and six students from several campuses and institutions in Kathmandu Valley, including GraminAdarsha Multiple Campus, Mahendra Ratna Campus, and Central Department of Education, University Campus. The study included two participants from the English language teaching and learning group. The study used a qualitative approach to collect primary data from 12 respondents, including students and teachers from various Kathmandu campuses. The goal was to identify learning challenges caused by the unplanned shift to online learning and propose new teaching strategies to address these challenges and ensure uninterrupted studies. The researcher consulted secondary sources, such as research reports, public libraries, websites, and newspapers, to get a comprehensive grasp of the issue.

The researcher valued the qualitative comments from participants. The children expressed gratitude for the opportunity to discuss contemporary difficulties in school, including learning obstacles imposed by the virus epidemic. The study found that educational institutions have difficulty in providing online classes owing to unexpected, unsystematic, and spontaneous need to satisfy course objectives. As schools employ technology to address the unprecedented problem, it's important to prioritize equity and accessibility for all. The virus pandemic has highlighted the rapid changes in lifestyle and education systems. Educational institutions might never be the same again. The future of digital education remains uncertain. Online learning's future advantages and hazards remain unclear. Based on feedback from instructors and students, virtual learning has emerged as a new kind of technology-based instruction.

Students Perspectives on Online Instruction and Class Management

Assessing and evaluating students' learning outcomes presents unique problems for universities. Dissatisfied students who believe online learning is inferior to in-person lectures may take action against colleges. Users' initial experiences greatly impact their perception of online learning's convenience and effectiveness. This significantly impacts its uptake. Students are concerned that the rush to introduce online learning at the expense of quality may lead to its abandonment once the corona virus pandemic is over. Going online requires significant planning and support for faculty members at the forefront of this movement, beyond a mere operating notice based on an emergency declaration.

Encouraging Students to Participate in Online English Language Classes

Education systems should work to increase college and university students' participation in order to prepare them to support their learning through effective methods. In addition, teachers require assistance in order to successfully integrate technology into their lesson plans and strategies and assist students in overcoming some of the challenges that come with using this type of learning environment. The most important thing to do to make sure that ICT is used successfully is to support teachers' training about the use of digital resources for pedagogical practice and to promote teaching approaches tailored to this environment. Developing positive attitudes towards learning can help students overcome problems in online learning, such as staying focused and motivated. They play a significant role in assisting students in properly utilizing information and communication technology (ICT) and innovative learning tools. Positive attitudes towards learning, self-regulation, and intrinsic motivation improve overall student performance.

Teachers Reasons for Using Virtual English Language Classrooms

Family and teacher support, as well as exposure to role models, significantly impact students' attitudes and dispositions. Research indicates that family and teacher support, including emotional support and enthusiasm, is crucial for developing positive attitudes towards learning and maximizing online learning opportunities. During the pandemic crisis, some families and instructors may struggle to give necessary support due to time constraints, limited digital abilities, or lack of curricular requirements.

V. Conclusions

This paper examines the issues faced by the education system during the Corona crisis, including the unsystematic and rapid move to online learning. Data were acquired by a questionnaire administered to participants from several campuses, universities and colleges in India valley.

The researcher interviewed professors and students and discovered that online classes lack a systematic approach, posing a significant obstacle for successful teaching and learning in today's context. Students have significant challenges in attending and participating in lessons due to factors such as their living conditions, psychology, family situation, and limited access to power and Internet. The study discovered that students struggle with learning due to a lack of face-to-face interaction, incomplete task orientation, low motivation, bad internet connection, and other technological obstacles. Some pupils are unable to access the Internet or use digital gadgets. Research suggests that studying online might be more distracting, particularly for family members and younger siblings. Longer Internet use poses health hazards for instructors and professors, including red eyes, headaches, and back pain.

During this crisis, institutions, especially colleges and universities, must defend the opinions of English language learners who benefit from online teaching and learning. Improving accessibility can boost student motivation and accomplishment, while also preventing mental health issues. Learners and educators must be psychologically and physically equipped for the "new standard" of pandemic survival learning. Effective online teaching requires a well-thought-out plan and implementation.

References

- [1]. Aji, R. H. S. (2012). Dampak pada Pendidikan di Indonesia: Sekolah, Keterampilan, dan Proses Pembelajaran. *SALAM: Jurnal Sosial dan Budaya Syar-i*, 7(5), 395–402.
- [2]. Bastola, A., Sah, R., Morales, A. J. R., Lal, B. K., Jha, R., Ojha, H. C., . . . Pandey, B.D. (2012). The first 2009 novel coronations case in Nepal. *The Lancet*, 20(3), 279–280. [https://doi.org/10.1016/S1473-3099\(20\)30067-0](https://doi.org/10.1016/S1473-3099(20)30067-0).
- [3]. Beauchamp, G. (2012). *ICT in the primary campus in pedagogy to practice*. London: Pearson.
- [4]. Bolt, D. & Crawford, R. (2000). *Digital divide: Computers and our children's future*. New York: TV Books.
- [5]. Bruffee, Kenneth. (1993). *Collaborative learning*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press.
- [6]. Candy, P., Crebert, G., & O'Leary, J. (1994). *Developing lifelong students through undergraduate education*. Canberra, Australia: Australian Government Publishing Service.
- [7]. Chun, E. & Evans, A. (2009). *Bridging the diversity divide: Globalization and reciprocal empowerment in higher education*. Hoboken, New Jersey: Wiley.
- [8]. Creswell, J. W. (2012). *Educational research: Planning, conducting, and evaluating quantitative and qualitative research*. (4th ed.). New Delhi: PHI Learning Pvt. Ltd.

- [9]. Croxall, B. and Koh, A. (2013). Digital Pedagogy: A Digital Pedagogy Unconference, retrieved from <http://www.briancroxall.net/digital/pedagogy/what-is-digitalpedagogy/> on 14/02/2019.
- [10]. Dey, I. (1993). *Qualitative data analysis: A user-friendly guide for social scientists*. London: Routledge.
- [11]. Dillenbourg, P. (2002). Over-scripting CSCL: The risks of blending collaborative learning with instructional design. In P. A. Kirschner (Ed.), *Three worlds of CSCL: Can we support CSCL?* (pp. 61-91). Heerlen, Nederland: Open University of the Netherlands.
- [12]. Gautam, G.R. (2012). English Language Teacher Professional Development During pandemic in Nepal. *Interdisciplinary Research in Education*, 5 (1&2).103- 112. <https://doi.org/10.3126/ire.v5i1&2.34739>.
- [13]. Gyamerah, K. (2012). The impacts of pandemic on basic education: How can Ghana respond, cope, and plan for recovery? Accessed on 01/04/2020. <https://campusofeducation.blogs.bristol.ac.uk/2020/03/31/theimpacts-of-ovid-19-on-basiceducation-how-can-ghana-respond-cope-andplan-for-recovery>.
- [14]. Kantipur News (2017, 07 May). *MaanabAdhikarAayoglevanyo-Online shikshakonaammababalikalaidabmanaparaun*. Available at: <https://ekantipur.com/news/2020/05/07/15888427027271507.html>
- [15]. Attride-Stirling, J. (2001). Thematic networks: An analytic tool for qualitative research. *Qualitative Research*, 1, 385-405. doi:10.1177/146879410100100307
- [16]. Carver, P. R., Lewis, L., & Tice, P. (2010). *Alternative schools and programs for public school students at risk of educational failure: 2007-08 (NCES 2010-026)*. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education.[Online] Available: <http://nces.ed.gov/pubs2010/2010026.pdf>
- [17]. Cates, J. T., & Schaeffe, S. E. (2011). The relationship between a college preparation program and at-risk students' college readiness. *Journal of Latinos and Education*, 10(4), 320-334. doi:10.1080/15348431.2011.605683
- [18]. Cozby, P. C. (2009). *Methods in behavioral research* (10th ed.). New York, NY: McGraw Hill.
- [18]. Foley, M. D. (2009). *An exploratory action research study investigating the consequences of the implementation of a middle school alternative education program*. (Doctoral dissertation). Available from ProQuest Dissertations and Theses database. (UMI No. 3341585)