

# Learning Techniques to Help Undergraduates' English Language Proficiency by using Digital Instruction

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## Abstract:

Due to the sudden closure of educational institutions as a result of the coronavirus, educators have adjusted to online instruction. In the Indian context, educators have also encountered difficulties while implementing digital platforms to provide curricula, especially when teaching English online. This work aims to update new digital teaching-learning techniques in order to enhance proficiency in English among the undergraduate students. To that end, an assessment on digital200 undergraduate students in their second year were given language instruction. a preliminary exam, A post-test and training program were implemented to ensure the authenticity of the inquiry. The Fifty pupils (the experimental group) have received intense training from researchers for fifteen days through online resources with student-focused exercises meant to enhance English linguistic abilities. Many internet resources have been introduced to students in order to improve their English language proficiency outside of the curriculum that piques their curiosity.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

The COVID-19 pandemic indeed triggered significant disruptions in the global education system, forcing a rapid shift from traditional classroom teaching to online learning. The challenges posed by the sudden lockdown necessitated the adoption of various digital tools and techniques to facilitate distance learning. Here are some key points related to the impact of COVID-19 on education and the transition to online teaching:

**Magnitude of Disruption:** The lockdown measures, implemented in response to the spread of COVID-19, led to the closure of schools and colleges worldwide. The World Economic Forum reported that approximately 1.2 billion students across 186 countries were affected by these closures.

**Shift to Distance Learning:** UNESCO responded to the school closures by advocating for distance learning strategies. Educational institutions had to quickly adapt to remote teaching methods to ensure that students could continue their academic learning despite the physical closure of schools.

**Digital Platforms:** Online teaching became a necessity, and educators turned to digital platforms to deliver lessons and engage with students. Various digital platforms that had been available for years, but were not extensively utilized in the education system, came to the forefront.

**Educational Inequality:** The shift to online learning highlighted existing educational inequalities, as not all students had equal access to the necessary technology and internet connectivity. This underscored the need for efforts to bridge the digital divide and ensure equitable access to education.

**Long-Standing Digital Tools:** As Susan Ko and Steve Rossen pointed out in 2017, several digital tools and techniques had been available for over two decades. The pandemic served as a catalyst for educators to explore and implement these tools more effectively. Web tools and techniques became crucial in creating engaging and effective online learning environments.

**Challenges for Teachers:** Teachers faced challenges in adapting to online teaching methodologies. They needed to learn how to effectively use web tools, design engaging online activities, and manage virtual classrooms. Professional development opportunities became essential to support educators in this transition.

**Pedagogical Adaptations:** The shift to online teaching required not only technological adjustments but also pedagogical adaptations. Teachers had to rethink their instruction strategies to ensure that learning objectives were met in a digital environment.

**Global Collaboration:** The pandemic emphasized the importance of global collaboration in the education sector. Educators, policymakers, and stakeholders worldwide shared insights and best practices to navigate the challenges brought about by the unprecedented situation.

**Hybrid Learning Models:** The experience of widespread online teaching during the pandemic prompted discussions about the future of education. Many institutions began considering hybrid learning models that combine both in-person and online components for a more flexible and resilient education system. In conclusion, the COVID-19 pandemic accelerated the integration of digital tools and techniques in education, transforming the way teaching and

learning are approached. While the challenges were substantial, the experience also opened up new possibilities for innovation and collaboration in the field of education.

### **1.1 Online teaching during COVID-19 lockdown in India**

In India, educational institutes were closed from 16th March, 2020 and national wide lockdown started on 24th March, 2020 to prevent the coronavirus spread. This suspension of regular classes disturbed ongoing academic year activities. Hence, educational institutes moved to virtual classroom teaching- learning process. Teachers adopted online teaching to ensure learning and accomplishing curriculum. Roshni Chakrabarty (2020) noted in India today's article that the learning online platforms has gained prominence about 5 years, but this dreadful situation forced teach and learn online. Jack Prince (2020) explained that whiteboards, breakout rooms, notes, chat, and poll provide wonderful opportunities to create online classroom more interactive. Teachers can integrate these facilities to make online teaching livelier.

### **1.2 English language teaching through online during COVID-19 lockdown**

English language teaching with integrated digital platforms is not very new in India owing to its countless advantages. According to Frayer (2005) as mentioned by Hafiz (2013) opine that 'Integrating ICT tools in teaching can lead to increased students learning competencies and increase opportunities for communication'. English language online with students' friendly digital tools helps students to learn with effectiveness of learning. Teachers face challenges to apply student friendly digital platforms to enhance learning and to meet their expectations (Rashid, Cunningham, Watson, & Howard, 2018). Teachers were obligated to teach and conducted language activities on virtual classrooms due to sudden lockdown.

### **1.3 Aim of the research**

This study focuses on teaching and testing English Language skills of first Year B.Tech. Biotechnology students at KL University, Vaddeswaram, India through online during COVID-19 lockdown.

### **1.4 Statement of the problem**

Teaching learning process in colleges is forced to shift from classroom to online platforms due to COVID-19 lockdown. Therefore, there is a need for innovative strategies in online teaching-learning process for enhancing English language learning.

### **1.5 Objective of research**

1. To implement innovative strategies to enhance English language through online teaching.

2. To make use of online platforms to bring desired leaning outcome among the language learners.

## 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

**Historical Perspective:** According to Mutambik (2018), technology has been aiding language education since as far back as 1960. Over the decades, there has been a significant increase in the use of technology in English language learning.

**Lessons from the Past:** Davies (2012b) reflected on the last 20 years of Computer-Assisted Language Learning (CALL) and discussed the implemented learning strategies along with their advantages and disadvantages. The study suggests that introducing Artificial Intelligence (AI) and Machine Learning (ML) could have further improved major language skills in English.

**Digital Era Requirements:** Arif Suryo Priyatmojo (2018) emphasized the importance of synergy among teachers, students, and infrastructure in the digital era of English language learning. The goal is to align everyone's vision and mission to produce independent learning activities and outcomes in line with digital citizenship.

**Effectiveness of Technology in Language Skills:** Research indicates that technology has significantly contributed to the improvement of LSRW (Listening, Speaking, Reading, and Writing) skills in English. Digital Storytelling is highlighted as an effective strategy for enhancing language skills, particularly speaking and listening.

**Integration of Storytelling Model:** The integration of the Storytelling model in English language teaching-learning processes has been proven effective in enhancing all four language skills (Nazir Atta-Alla, 2012).

**Diverse Digital Activities:** Various digital activities, such as blogs, video conferencing, online books, interactive books, language games, pep talks, and slide show preparation, are mentioned as effective tools for English language teaching and learning. These activities provide numerous learning opportunities and engage learners in language activities that produce comprehensible output.

Overall, the passage underscores the transformative role of digital technologies in English language education, offering diverse strategies and tools to enhance language skills in learners.

## 3. METHODOLOGY

### 3.1 Research Design

The present study focuses on innovative strategies in online teaching to enhance English language learning and bring desired learning outcome among the undergraduate students. A structured questionnaire was designed to identify how online teaching-learning help students to develop English language skills and was administered to 100 randomly selected students. After collecting the data from the students, their perceptions were analysed, tabulated, and interpreted. The statements were measured with Likert scale: Disagree strongly:1, Disagree:2, Not a Strong Opinion :3, Agree:4, Agree strongly:5

The questions were asked to make the learners understand on online teaching to develop language. Learners were asked to respond to every question in the column by marking tick.

I enjoy learning language from online teaching.

- Online classes are consuming more time to improve my language skills.
- I love doing language activities on online platforms.
- I can learn many new skills through online classes.

The data was analysed and calculated according to the 5- point Likert scale. Pre-test was conducted for 100 randomly selected students by the researchers. Based on the scores of the sample learners, a training programme was designed. The researchers divided students into two group: one group is experimental group and other is control group. Each group had 50 students. Control group was taught syllabus in the traditional method through online class. Whereas the researchers designed an intensive online training program for the experimental group to improving language skills, by including a variety of language activities to their online classes. On the other hand, the control group did not receive any training. The training schedule was conducted for a period of 15 days. Control group was taught just using online class in the traditional method.

### 3.2 Training

Jamie Johnson opines that Online teaching opens new levels of creativity and opportunity. Each session of online training session was sixty minutes. It was conducted five days in a week for three weeks. The learners participated in the following activities to improve English language skills by attending online classes. The researchers used WebEx, WhatsApp and google forms for quizzes as online platforms to interact and teach online. The researchers designed activities based on the syllabus of the first-year degree students at KL University.

**3.2.1 Activity 1:** Vocabulary test through google form and quiz in online class: Very first day of online class was exiting for students. The researchers welcomed the class online and confirmed with them that they can see and hear. The researchers used ppt to explain Palindromes with examples. Class was divided into two breakout groups whenever necessary. Flashcards were shared on the screen and students participated actively. Later, students were asked to take up quiz on google form and submit it. The researchers emphasized importance of keeping good personal vocabulary recording few free web links on vocabulary test to develop their proficiency.

**3.2.2 Activity 2:** Google quiz on grammar: As the part of teaching, the researchers taught 'Adverb' sharing whiteboard with students on WebEx platform. Students were given chance to write some examples on whiteboard online which made them more attentive in the class. The researchers conducted quiz using google quiz on the same topic. Students participated with great interest to check their grammatical skills. The researchers explained significance of student autonomy in learning language and encouraged them to learn and test their English language skills on online resources like BBC English and Cambridge.

**3.2.3 Activity 3:** Practicing Reading Skills using digital platforms: As the part of the curriculum the researchers demonstrated reading paragraph to the online class and gave inputs to practice reading skills. Students were motivated to read small paragraph from the latest news about COVID-19. Students were inspired to read which helped them to build vocabulary and share the current issues in the world. A few students gave feedback that the class entitled them with information about the present scenario in the world and gave them interest to read news to improve language. The researchers encouraged students to read online books, stories, novels, and interest of their own choice.

**3.2.4 Activity 4:** Improve writing skills using Cambridge English write & improve website: The researchers taught writing formal letters with sample letters and gave a situation to write formal letters. The researchers explained to students how to use Cambridge English write & improve website to practice writing skills to improve. Most of the Students adopted this tool to progress in writing skills by taking the advantage of instant feedback system in it.

**3.3 Post-test:** The researchers conducted Post-test for experimental group to measure application and impact of the students after the successful completion of the fifteen days of intensive training. At the same time the post-test was also conducted to the control group after

completion of same syllabus. A significant increase in score was observed in the experimental group after the training programme. The experimental group also felt they developed an instinct for learning language.

### 3.4 Findings

- A good number of students 'Strongly Agreed' that they enjoyed themselves digital classroom on WebEx platform.
- It was learned that most of the students were reluctant to participate online in discussions initially. But after few brainstorming sessions, they were encouraged to participate in discussions. It was proved that experimental group of students enhanced English language skills through innovative practices of English language teaching using digital platforms.
- Most of the experimental group students scored good marks in the test at the end of the training programme.

## 4. CONCLUSION

The results of the research confirm that, during COVID-19, the online training program focused on improving undergraduates' language proficiency in English was more effective than regular classroom instruction. According to the study, this online instruction serves as a stand-in during the problem of the COVID-19 lockdown. This study concentrated on a small sample of pupils, and it can be expanded to include a variety of pupils. The researchers' efforts were restricted to two to three locations. It is also extensible.

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