

Teacher Innovation and Challenges in Teaching English Language through Digital Technologies

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Abstract

Isolation has become mandatory in all aspects of life. It is noticed that this pandemic has made teaching Online a mandatory one. It has become difficult for students to attend the regular classroom education due to the pandemic. The whole process of teaching students has taken a huge shift from face-to-face learning to e-learning. On entering this digital platform, the teachers are put into a great task of learning to use technology, adapting themselves to a new mode of teaching English and get the attention of students. On account of the same, this paper focuses on the various innovation made by the teachers to teach English Language and the different challenges faced by them. This research also uses the questionnaire survey method to analyse the various challenges and innovations made by the teachers in to produce desirable results. It is also found that the difficulties are mostly faced due to the lack of technology by the students. Poverty is also considered to be one of the rising factors for the denial of education to the EFL learners. The lack of conversation in virtual teaching is considered to be a great challenge for teachers. The study results that most Teachers are not satisfied with the virtual teaching even after using all the innovative methods to teach English.

KEYWORDS: e-learning, Virtual teaching, Pandemic, EFL learner, technology

INTRODUCTION

The Pandemic has brought a great change in the lives of the Language Professors and that of the students. The change has occurred in a drastic way that the shift from face-to-face learning to online learning is made mandatory for all levels of education. It has become hectic for the Professors to cope with the new trends in the digital technology. Time consumption plays a major role for the teachers to learn using Digital technology without prior training and suit the needs of the students to train them in English. According to Chapelle “The abilities required by English language users should be directly relevant to English language teachers” (2021) Though, we say that technology and English language teaching are given equal importance, it is believed that some focus on the importance on technology for language teaching while others criticize it. The high increase in virtual teaching has also led to the deployment of creativity in the students. As C. A. Bowers rightly explains “how this form of knowledge undermines the importance and existence of local knowledge; and how the displacement of local knowledge with data and other decontextualized, electronically communicated symbol systems contributes to the consumer lifestyle that harms the environment” (Bowers 2000) This research paper

focuses on the varied innovations employed by the teachers in the digital classroom and the various challenges faced by them to teach English Language through Technology.

ELT REVIEW

The innovations made by the teachers to help students acquire the language are diverse. As Carol A. Chapelle clearly points out in one of his articles that the Learners of English do not face any difficulties that they faced in a physical classroom. The students need not showcase their identity and can have interactions with anyone around the globe. The students need not spend more time in checking how they use the language. The student's learned with interest, access to internet and abundance of time.

In an article by Jan Lacina, its noted that a specific technology will not adhere to the needs of the students. The teachers should make sure that the technology aims to focus on the interactivity level. The instructions have to be provided by the computer to the student to help them concentrate and practice their language. The use of technology in an ELT classroom was considered as a great advantage.

Min Pun says in one of his articles that the use of technology is considered more effective for the non-native speakers of English who don't have the chance to speak with a native speaker and learn the foreign culture. The context is understood by the students with the help of Power point presentations rather than a classroom lecture. The Technology provides with real-life situations to the students, thereby helping them to understand and comprehend the students to learn English Language in a fast-paced manner.

In an article, "Teaching English with Technology – Developing Online Teaching Skills Special Issue", the author says that there are teachers who are not having proper financial support. These teachers who are working as Freelancers cannot opt to upgrade themselves with the skills necessary to learn ICT model and implement them in the classroom. It is the responsibility of the government to give Permanent jobs to these teachers. It is the duty of the institution to provide with technological support to the faculty.

In an article by AriefEkoPriyoAtmojo and ArifNugroho, it is noted that the students do not have access to a smartphone. The financial situation of the parents is very low that they could not afford to buy a smartphone for the children. The students also have a poor range of Internet Connectivity. The Digital Literacy is very low that they do not focus on using the mobile for learning, they also don't understand how to upload their projects on time. Work with regard to independent facilities are provided to the students to do in their free time. The interaction between Students and Teachers have also decreased considerably.

RESEARCH METHOD

Research context and participants

This research was conducted among Professors in India. They were Professors who teach English as a Foreign Language to Students. Some Teachers also handle Communicative English and Professional English. The teachers speak English in their Classroom while their native Language is their Regional Language. The participants were 30 English

Professors from both Urban and Rural settings in India. The teaching of English should be made more practical and language oriented. According to Patel and Jain, English is to be taught as language of comprehension rather than as literary language. (2008). The Professors who participated in this research focused on the practical and language-oriented teaching in their classrooms.

DATA COLLECTION AND ANALYSIS

The teachers were given a questionnaire through google forms. They were provided with 15 questions to study the challenges and innovations that they faced while teaching English through Digital technologies. These questions were given based on purposive sampling method which focuses on obtaining the information that is necessary. It gives an analysis of the background of the students and the challenges faced by the teacher who uses digital technology to handle classes during this pandemic. To prove the data to be true, the research is provided with pie charts.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

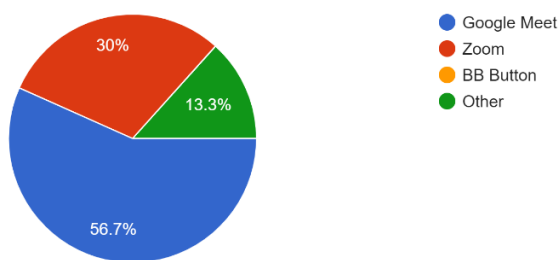
The questionnaire was set and provided to 30 professors working in India. The research provided 15 questions which focused on the background of the students, the platform used by the teachers, the various interactive procedures adopted by them and the training given to them. The various questions that were posed to the Professors and the results with regard to the same are analysed in a detailed manner.

APPLICATIONS AND PLATFORMS

The various applications and platforms that were used for the teaching of English Language during the Pandemic were Google meet, Zoom app, Big Blue Button and other apps. The teachers focused on the amount of data that were consumed while using each app resulting in the choice of the apps and the availability of the app with the student. Most teachers found that students used Google meet platform as this was a user-friendly platform. The students were taught to enter the online meet classrooms from their mobiles. They also learnt to mute and unmute themselves. The Professors were asked to mention the platform which helped them innovate ideas teaching online. It was found that nearly 56.7% students used Google meet to learn English online. The zoom app was used by 30% of the students. The BB button was an unknown platform to most of the colleges. 13.3% of the students used other apps to engage in their daily lessons.

1. What platform is used to teach Students in your college?

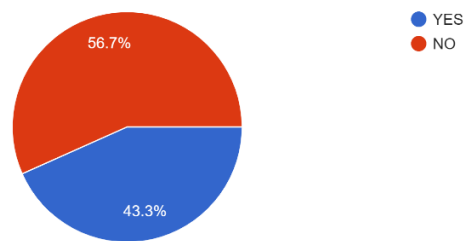
30 responses



TRAINING TO TEACHERS TO TEACH ONLINE

According to Fullan (1992), there exists three dimensions of change for the teacher using computers in the classroom: (a) the use of new hardware and software materials, (b) the adoption of new activities, behaviors or practices, and (c) changes in beliefs and understanding. The research points out one of the major challenges of teachers to teach English online and that is there were lack of training to the teachers. Most teachers do not use Gadgets. They were not given proper training to teach students on how to use online platforms as they themselves were not given effective training. The Pandemic didn't give enough space and time for the teachers to grasp the usage of online platforms and the methods to teach English online. Most teachers themselves were not aware of the ways and the features with which they could teach English Online. It is noted that nearly 56.7% of the teachers were not given any training to teach English through Digital platform. Only 43.3% of the teachers were given training.

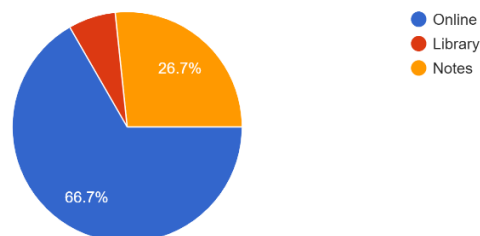
2. Were you given any training to use the Digital technology ?
30 responses



ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

The Teachers relied mostly on the Internet during the pandemic to teach English. Many teachers were not able to go to the library due to the Lockdown. Some relied on notes that they took during their previous years of teaching. 66.7% of teachers relied on the Internet, 26.7% relied on the notes that they already had and 6.7% of teachers had access to the library.

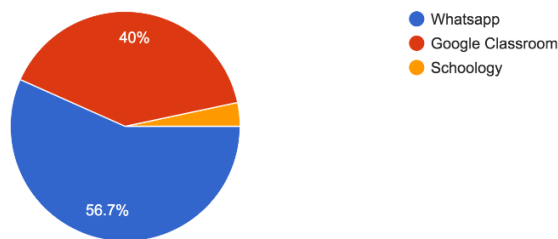
3. Where do you get your additional resources?
30 responses



APPLICATIONS USED TO SHARE MATERIALS

The applications that were used for sharing the materials were WhatsApp, Google Classroom and Schoology. WhatsApp is a common app available in all mobiles. The teachers create groups in the WhatsApp for every subject resulting in storage issues for the students.

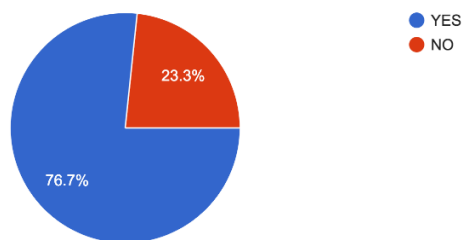
4. Which app is used to share materials?
30 responses



STUDENT MOTIVATION

Motivation can influence what we learn, how we learn and when we choose to learn (Schunk and Usher 2012). Though students face feelings of getting isolated, less time and extra work, it is observed that the students have gained motivation to speak English in the online Platform. Intrinsic motivation like being regular to the class, curious to learn innovative ideas and new concepts helps in making the students motivated. They find that this is the safe space to speak in English because they might be made fun in a physical classroom. 78.7% students feel motivated to speak English when they are given a chance in an online platform because there is no possibility for a chorus answer.

5. Are students motivated to speak English in an Online Platform?
30 responses

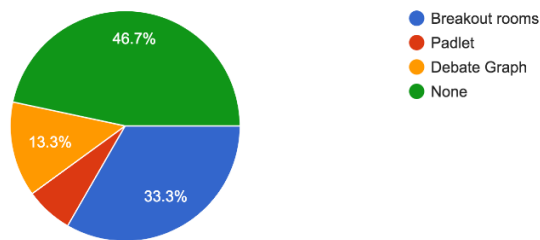


INTERACTION

Interactions highlight processes that take place between peers undertaking a course together (Moore 1989). Interactions between students is necessary to develop intellectually and emotionally. Peer learning is highly essential for the better understanding of the subject that is taken in the classroom. Some teachers tend to use

breakout rooms, padlet and debate graph to help students discuss their ideas. But most of the students are not given enough space to interact or converse with each other. 48.7% of students are not given any medium to have an interaction.

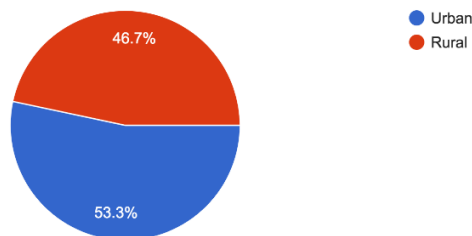
6. What innovative method do you use to make students interact with each other ?
30 responses



STUDENT BACKGROUND

The student background plays a major role in deciding which setting makes the students less accessible to the online classroom. The students who attend online classes lack material for learning. Though 53.3% students are from urban setting, they still do not have access to smartphones and internet connectivity.

7. What is the background of the students to whom you teach?
30 responses

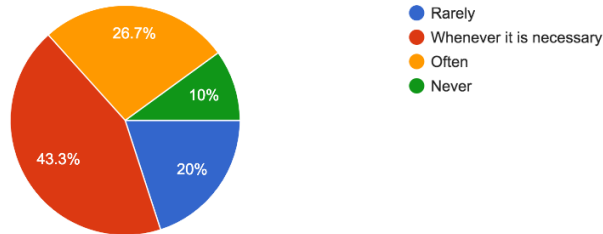


INTERACTION BETWEEN TEACHER AND STUDENTS

Interaction has been used in online learning to denote anything from clicking on a link to interpersonal dialogue among many participants (Nichols 2008). When the students interact with the teachers, they can get timely feedback. The progression of the student can be monitored and the teacher can facilitate tests to improve their performance. The Interaction between the teacher and the students develops the bond and creates room for more education. But it is impossible in an online platform. Nearly, 10% teachers do not have any form of interaction. 43.3% of teachers interact and understand the situation of the students only when it is necessary.

8. Do you interact with students on an individual level?

30 responses

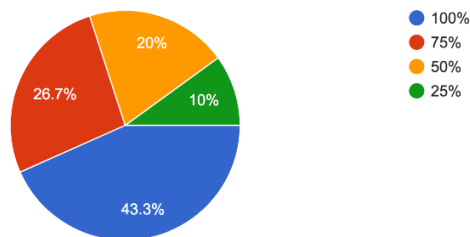


ACCESS TO SMARTPHONES

Out of 30 students, 13 teachers say that all their students have access to smartphones. But the fact is not the same for every other teacher. 8 teachers conclude that only 75% of their students can attend classes through the online platform. 6 teachers say that only 50% of their students were able to purchase a smartphone. 3 teachers find that only 25% students from rural background have smartphone while the remaining 75% do not have financial stability to purchase a smartphone.

9. Do all your students have access to smartphone?

30 responses

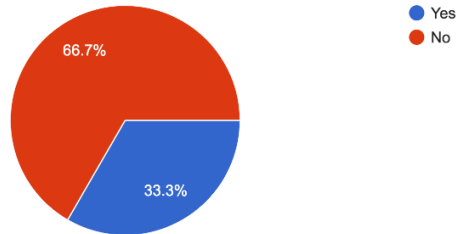


INTERNET CONNECTIVITY

The lack of Internet connectivity is because of the place where the students are from. The students from outer areas of the city and rural areas still find it difficult to download materials due to the lack of internet connectivity. Not everyone would have access to Wi-Fi, it is noticed that few students just recharge for the minimum internet data. Nearly 66.7% of students do not have stable internet connectivity resulting in poor attendance in the online classroom.

10. Do your students have stable Internet connectivity?

30 responses

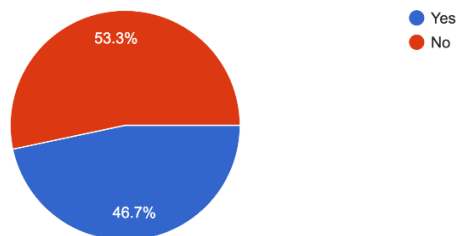


DIGITAL LITERACY

E-learning is a common generic term used to describe anything on this continuum that incorporates digital technologies in the learning process (Nichols 2008). First, Students will gain Digital Literacy only if they have daily access to smartphones. Some students use their parent's smartphone to check the WhatsApp group or any other class group for the updates. But their parents take the smartphone to work. Some students are very young that they do not have any idea of accessing a smartphone without the guidance of the parents. Nearly 53.3% of students do not seem to have digital literacy according to the survey.

11. Do your students have digital Literacy?

30 responses

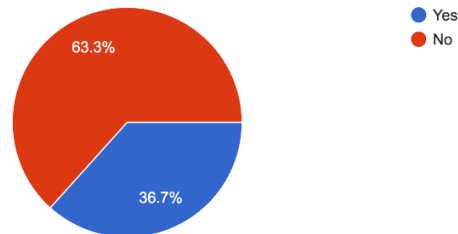


ONLINE EXAM

Due to the lack of Digital Literacy, students do not upload their answer scripts on time. Some students do not have proper camera in their smartphone to upload the answer sheets. Nearly 63.3% of students do not know how to upload the answer script on time.

12. Do they upload their answer sheets in Google classroom / WhatsApp on time?

30 responses

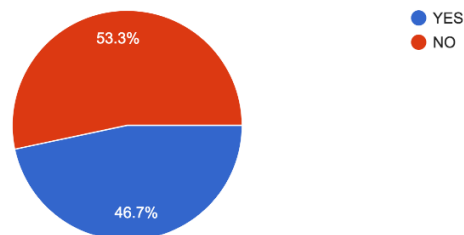


PUNCTUALITY

Punctuality is a major factor to attend any class. But the factors that result from using the smartphones like absence of battery due to power cut, lack of Internet connectivity, the low performance of the mobile, storage issues create barrier for the students who do not have a proper smartphone and Internet connectivity to be late to the online classroom. Nearly 53.3% of students enter the online classroom quite late.

13. Are students punctual to the online classes?

30 responses

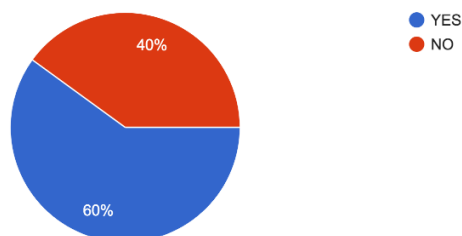


EMOTIONAL BOND

Emotional Bond develops only when interaction develops on an on-going process. The online platform has created a distance between the teacher and the student. The teacher identifies the problem of the students just by looking at the face. But the online classroom does not give enough space for it. Nearly 40% of students do not have any bonding with the teachers. While 60% of teachers acclaim that they have emotional bond with the students, it cannot be on a personal level where teachers sit beside the students to help them with their situations.

14. Is there an emotional bond between you and the Student?

30 responses

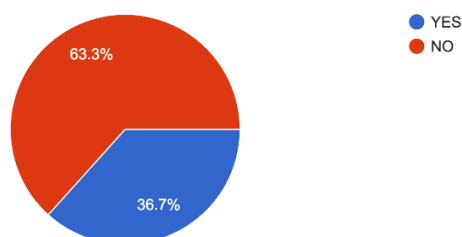


MONITORING BY THE PARENTS

Most of the students are not monitored by the parents because their parents would have their own jobs to do and chores to attend to. They do not have time to sit beside their children and monitor them. Though, Apps can be used to control the usage of various platforms by the student, the parents too do not have much digital literacy to change the settings in the smartphone.

15. Are the students monitored while using the mobile by their parents?

30 responses



CONCLUSION

The Present Research focuses on the online language learning through Digital technologies. The results were gathered from surveys that were filled by the ELT teachers. The teachers have tried their best to deliver the output by using various platforms and by making students interact in an online platform. More planning is required to do the Online teaching as it acquires more time than face-to-face learning. The future holds the responsibility to train both the teacher and the students to access their smartphones. Financial instability is found to be one of the major reasons for the lack of interest to give their best in the online platform. There are problems related to stable internet connectivity. All these must be checked for proper integration of technology with that of the language learning. Finally, to make sure that the online teaching is done efficiently there should be an integration of real-life settings in an online classroom where everything is taught in a contextual manner along with activities.

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