



Original Article

Perception of Students and Teachers Regarding Online Teaching of English Language: A Case of Secondary School Hyderabad - Pakistan

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Abstract

This study explored the perceptions of students and teachers regarding online English teaching and learning. The research study was carried out using quantitative descriptive method, in which qualitative data was collected through semi-structured interviews and analyzed through thematic analysis. Meanwhile the quantitative data was collected using close-ended questionnaires, separate for both teachers and students. The data collected was validated through a pilot study. For the reliability of the data, closed-ended responses were tested using the Cronbach Alpha test. The value for this study's close-ended tool is 0.7. The findings of the study suggests that teaching of English language virtually is more beneficial for teachers and students as it offers many Perceived Usefulness (PU) advantages namely; accessibility, time saving, awareness of new technology and its applications. It was also found to be challenging to some extent as Perceived Ease of Usefulness (PEOU). The challenges may include, major power breakdown, lack of resources, poor network connections, lack of professional and academic trainings about the use of modern technology and its applications by the teachers and the students. The pandemic era was the time of complete closure of schools; hence, teaching virtually was considered a blessing in disguise.

Keywords: online english teaching, online english learning, perceived ease of usefulness, perceived usefulness

INTRODUCTION

Multiple technological inventions like laptops, computer and electronic devices have reformed the world. Before COVID-19, these technologies were mostly used as communication tools. However, with the outbreak of COVID-19, these tools were widely used in educational institutions to save nations from the backlash of the pandemic, which forced schools to close globally. Pakistan too was forced to shut down educational activities and institutions encouraging the use of electronic gadgets as savior tools, normalizing e-learning as students and teachers worked from home (Noor, et al., 2020). Although technology has grown tremendously but the effectiveness of this new normal was still uncertain in the Pakistani context as various factors like unavailability of resources, economic conditions of the masses, power outbreaks etc.; influenced the process hampering E-learning's efficiency during the COVID-19 pandemic.

This paper explores the perceptions of students and teachers regarding the teaching of English language, as the pandemic kindled the process of online teaching/learning as the new norm. Before the emergence of the COVID-19 pandemic, there was meager use of online platforms in the teaching and learning of English language, specifically in the context of schools in Pakistan. The online practices of COVID-19 era still somehow prevail. However, this study does not intend to find those practices but it intends to find the insights of students' and teachers' perceptions towards the effectiveness and ease of using technology and virtual tools (PU & PEOU) in teaching and learning English at the secondary school level (Umair & Nasir, 2021). This is the reason, the research is trying to investigate the views of students along with their teachers regarding the teaching and learning of English language virtually in the post COVID-19 pandemic era.

Terminology

- E-Learning: Qureshi et al., (2012) defined this as a way that helps individuals living faraway to acquire education without the constraints of time and place.
- Online educator: The online educator is the one who assists students, provides knowledge, assesses the learners' knowledge and develops teaching learning materials (Edwards, et al., 2011).
- Conventional Method: It is a name given to face-to-face or in-person teaching. Shahzad, et al., (2021) describe it as a method where students are physically present in front of the teacher for learning.

In the wake of COVID-19, all educational organizations in Pakistan faced a frightening situation, where schools were called to an immediate closure bringing the teaching learning process to a sudden halt. This resulted in the shift from in-person to online teaching. As English is one of the core subjects taught at the secondary school level, teaching and learning English language was also affected by this shift. Teachers and students had perplexed views over this change, as it was easy and accessible to some and a complete nightmare to others. Thus, this current research work adopted the theoretical framework Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) given by Davis (1989) to examine and understand the perceptions of teachers along with students about teaching and learning English language online, at the secondary school level, in the context of Hyderabad, Pakistan.

Objectives

This research was carried out to find out the perceptions of students and teachers regarding online English language teaching and learning. It aimed to gauge the insights of learners and teachers regarding the great shift from in-person to virtual teaching and learning of English language. Following are the objectives for the research:

- To explore the perceptions of secondary school level students at a private school in Hyderabad towards the use of virtual tools to learn English language in Pakistan
- To explore the perceptions of secondary school level teachers at a private school in Hyderabad towards the use of virtual tools for learning English in Pakistan
- To understand the effectiveness of virtual tools for learning English at secondary school level Pakistan

Research Questions

- What are the perceptions of secondary school level students at a private school in Hyderabad towards the use of virtual tools to learn English language in Pakistan?
- What are the perceptions of secondary school level teachers at a private school in Hyderabad towards the use of virtual tools to teach English language in Pakistan?
- How far have virtual tools been beneficial in learning/teaching English at secondary school level in Pakistan?

Research is always carried out when it is valuable for the society and for researchers. The following study is done in order to extract perceptions as well as the effectiveness of On-line Tools used for teaching English language at the secondary school level Hyderabad, Pakistan. This will pool notions that exist about the virtual teaching and learning English trends in the Pakistani context since the outbreak of the COVID-19. Before moving further, we need to understand the meaning of the word "Perception". As per the observation from various search engines; perception can be defined as the accumulation of knowledge gained with the help of sensory motors to identify, deduce and understand the atmosphere. Moreover, many factors affect perception such as economic conditions, social conditions, gender, status and many more. Hence, this study discusses factors duly responsible for giving rise to positive or negative perceptions related to the usefulness of online tools for the teaching and learning of English language at the secondary school level Hyderabad, Pakistan.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Technology Acceptance Model is given by Davis (1989) refers to attitudes or perceptions of learners before using any technological instrument for learning. TAM recommends that the efficiency of the new technological initiation can be determined by the user's behaviors and intentions. It has two vital paradigms Perceived Usefulness (PU) and Perceived Ease of Usefulness (PEOU). As defined by Davis (1989), PU is the perception of a user, who believes that using any technological device or instrument will increase his/her performance. Whereas, PEOU is the effort required to use that particular technology. In this reference many researches have been carried out to find out the affectivity of PU and PEOU. For instance, Salloum et al., (2019) conducted a research, where they examined the positive affectivity of PEOU on learners. Additionally, researches by (Almarabeh, 2014; Farahat, 2012; Hsieh, et al., 2016; Al-Okaily, et al., 2020; Jiang et al., 2021) represent the constructive relationship of PU and PEOU in the spherical realm of online learning. Talk about the usefulness of technological instruments in the domain of learning was concluded in the research of Natasia et al., (2022), where it was deduced that the use of ICT tools did not assist the learners to achieve their goals. Therefore, the researcher has taken the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) as their theoretical framework to carry out this research (Sarwar, et al., 2017).

E-learning as a tool provides brighter chances for teaching and learning. Raja and Nagasubramani (2018) stated that today's learners are likely to choose technology because it gives them quick results. We now live in a smart and global world, therefore, online tools for teaching and learning can help both the teachers and students to work effectively. With the help of these platforms, teachers can consistently update their knowledge and learners can become more self-dependent than teacher-dependent. The COVID-19 pandemic restricted social interactions in the real world and opened possibilities via online or virtual tools. To prevent educational damage during that time, online classes, video conferences, submission and checking of assignments and revisiting previous lectures could only be made possible with the help of E-learning (Basilai & Kvavadze, 2020).

Research was conducted in Lahore and Faisalabad to explore the transiting phases of classroom teaching to online by Shahid and Shahid (2022); the research shows that virtual classes were less dynamic and effective due to certain reasons like; restricted social communication and less friendly environment.

Additionally, conventional methods of teaching English language can be compared with a car's journey, where situations are already planned; routes, stops and availability of everything, whereas E-teaching is compared with train's journey which requires a little bit of more detailing and pre-planning. In order to minimize the damage, educational technology (EdTech) servers acted as saviors of educational organizations worldwide (Malik, 2018). In the Pakistani context, 22.8 million children were not able secure admission and 5.3 million drop out cases was witnessed during the COVID-19 pandemic. Furthermore, Umair and Nasir (2021) noted it, that due to the lack of financial support from siblings and family and lack of accessibility to online facilities many students remained uneducated. Pakistan is a country where everyone cannot afford to own televisions, computers or other electronic devices therefore, computer literacy is deemed to be absent in the teachers and students of rural and of urban people. That is why it was a great loss to learning. Additionally, Geven and Hasan (2020), claimed that Pakistan was listed amongst the top ten countries, in the world, to possess the highest number of COVID-19 cases, especially in the province of Sindh.

Mumtaz et al., (2020), carried out a research study during the pandemic, on online academics, where he found a plethora of challenges being faced by teachers and students. Following issues/problems were identified; shift from conventional to online teaching, access to the internet and devices, low language proficiency, lack of computer literacy, security issues and ethical issues.

The present study considers all the relevant studies mentioned above as a basis to achieve its research objectives.

METHODOLOGY

The phenomenon of e-learning, which emerged in the educational domain during COVID-19, was a fairly new concept in the settings of Pakistan. When online teaching and learning processes were formalized in schools and universities, English too was taught using online platforms at educational institutions. Using both qualitative and quantitative approaches is an effective way to find out the general trend among the participants as well as helpful in seeking their in-depth views for the research. In order to achieve the proposed purpose, the researcher considered mixed methodology a suitable method for the current research Creswell, et al., (2003). This study extracts views and examines the effectiveness of using on-line tools in the teaching of English language.

According to Yin (2009) data collection enables deep understanding of the phenomenon. The study has used two kinds of data collection instruments, as it is based on mixed methodology. Close-ended questionnaire and semi-structured interviews have been used to collect data from the participants. To check its reliability and validity, instruments were testified through a pilot study by collecting data from thirty participants from the research site. According to Adams (2015), detailed semi-structured interviews are a unification of open-ended and close-ended items, typically asked vocally or orally. It pronounces the process and cause of certain phenomena which give detailed feedback related to the topic (Sarwar & Bhamani, 2018).

Interview questions were modified from the paper of Noor, et al., (2020). As this research study was conducted during the peak time of the Pandemic lockdown, when schools were operating virtually, the researcher interviewed participants via virtual tools such as; Zoom meetings, Microsoft Teams, WhatsApp voice and video calls, Skype conference call, Google Forms and Google Meet. Interviews were recorded and all the scripts were transcribed manually by the researcher.

Since, this study comprises of mixed methodology, a quantitative questionnaire was also adapted by blending the two tools of Sarwar, et al., (2020) to form a resource table that included 18 items in total. Minor reformation was carried out in order to make the items more user friendly.

Following is the resource table formed, which deals with the variables of the study (Table 1).

Table 1

Resource Table of Variables

No	Statements	Measuring Themes Subsets	Adapted from
1	Use of ICT tools for learning English are pleasant.	Positive Perception	Shahzad, et al., (2021)
2	Learners are pressurized to learn English virtually.	Negative Perception	
3	I face internet disconnections several times while taking English classes virtually.	Negative Perception	
4	There is no blockade in the participation during English classes.	Positive Perception about ICT tools.	
5	It is convenient to learn English, virtually.	Positive Perception about ICT tools.	
6	Learning English can be easy if some advancements are done.	Constructive Perception	
7	Every student has the facility of taking English classes online	Accessibility & availability.	
8	Virtual English classes enabled me to acquire skills faster than face-to-face classroom learning.	Effectiveness	
9	Virtual English learning promises excellent language learning.	Positive Perception	
10	Learning English face to face in the classroom is better than learning via computers.	Effectiveness	
11	Learning English on-line is easier than learning it face to face in the physical classroom.	Positive Perception	Sarwar, et al., (2020)
12	Learners are helped in tackling issues arising in the on-line English classroom.	Positive Perception	
13	I get the chance to interact with English teachers during my online English classes.	Accessibility	
14	I feel anxious while learning English virtually.	Negative Perception	
15	I get distracted easily while taking online English classes.	Negative Perception	
16	Ethical rules are implemented in virtual classes of English.	Positive Perception	
17	Every student is equally at ease to use ICT tools while learning English virtually.	Perception of Ease.	
18	I support virtual English learning even after the reopening of educational campuses.	Positive Perception	

Google forms were used to collect data, as schools were operating virtually. To meet the reliability of the semi structured interview, 7 English language teachers were involved in piloting of the study. These teachers belonged to private educational sector. Furthermore, questionnaires were used as quantitative data gathering tool for collecting data for the pilot study, with twenty five (25) participants from the same research site. This included male and female teachers as well as students.

Participants’ Responses

Data was collected from secondary school level by the researcher. 187 was the number of research participants. 103 students of ninth class participated and 84 students from matric class submitted their responses. 97 males and 90 were the female participants who submitted the responses. Among all of the participants, 30.48% students were strongly agreed with the effectiveness of using on-line tools in the teaching of English language, 36.24% were agreed, 24.96% were disagreed, and 8.32% were strongly disagreed (Table 2).

Table 2

Students' Responses

Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Total Percentage
30.48	36.24	24.96	8.32	100.00
n = 187				

Among all of the participants, 45.93% teachers were strongly agreed with the effectiveness of using on-line tools in the teaching of English language, 28.89% were agreed, 18.15% were disagreed, and 7.04% were strongly disagreed (Table 3).

Table 3

Teachers' Response

Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Total Percentage
45.93	28.89	18.15	7.04	100.00
n = 15				

The result from the collected data (from both questionnaire and interviews; via the extracted themes) showed that students and teachers have positive perceptions regarding this new shift. Moreover, the result depicted those students had less intrinsic motivation, as students agreed and strongly agreed that they were forced to learn English virtually. Despite acknowledging the online platform for learning English as pleasant and enjoyable, students displayed preference for traditional (in-person) classes. Talking about negative perceptions, students faced difficulties attending classes due to internet connectivity issues.

A large number of students said that ICT tools used for teaching English caused anxiety among them. As far as convenience of teaching English virtually is concerned, a significant number of teachers responded in favor of the phenomenon. Students and teachers displayed positive perceptions about online English language teaching and learning during the COVID-19 pandemic. The efficiency of the virtual platform for teaching English is quite beneficial. That means Perceived Usefulness was found effective in terms of teaching English at the secondary school level, whereas the Perceived Ease Of Usefulness was affected by a lot of factors that include; power shortage, unavailability of the resources, lack of proper training of teachers and students, economic conditions of the students and teachers etc.

CONCLUSION & RECOMMENDATIONS

English is considered as the most important language in every domain within Pakistan. It is the medium of instructions in schools from pre- primary to the tertiary level. It is the official language in Pakistan. Unfortunately, the sudden onset of COVID-19 pandemic affected the educational system not just in Pakistan but also across the world... Due to which, the teaching of English language in Pakistan had to undergo a major shift from conventional to the virtual method of teaching... To counter the closure of educational institutions during those chaotic times, teaching through the electronic medium was the best available option. The present study aimed to extract the perceptions of teachers and students regarding teaching and learning English language at the secondary level via online classrooms. The results of the present study show that this modern shift has had both beneficial as well as adverse effects for the teachers and students. It has been beneficial in terms of greater learning about technology and becoming better at using ICT tools. It has also been beneficial in terms of accessibility and time saving for both the teacher and the taught. On the other hand, this shift has also given rise to a number of disadvantages such as fake identities, bullying, internet connectivity issues, resourcefulness of the institutions, below average technological knowledge of the teachers and students, lack of computer devices and power breakdowns. As far as the convenience of teaching English virtually is concerned, 80% of teachers and students responded in favor of the phenomenon and advocated that they can teach and learn efficiently via virtual means. Thus, virtual classrooms have been one of the best substitutions for physical classes in the disordered times of COVID-19 pandemic.

The present study recommends the following:

- Both teachers and students should be trained for ICT tools and software to conduct and receive online classes
- Both teachers and students should have proper technology setup for teaching and learning English

online

- Technology awareness sessions like workshops and seminars, must be planned and executed for both teachers and students
- Schools and college should introduce their teachers and students to Computer Assisted Learning (CAL)
- Students and the teachers should be motivated to use E-books, E-notes, E-attendance and other electronic resources
- Privacy and restrictions must be monitored well by school and college systems to avoid any kind of privacy violation
- Government should ensure quality network coverage in all areas to avoid connectivity issues, especially in rural areas
- Government should introduce IT training programs for students from low-income backgrounds, in order to better equip them in operating the computer systems independently

Implications of the Study

English is considered to be the most regarded language in all domains in Pakistan. Hence, the teaching of English is considered crucial too. English has always been taught through conventional methods, which, in other words, is also called face-to-face teaching. Whereas, due to the onset of the Covid 19 pandemic, the teaching arena has witnessed a great shift from conventional to online teaching. This study draws out perceptions of teachers and students who experienced online teaching and learning as result of the pandemic... It also determines number of challenges faced by both teachers and students during this time. Moreover, it suggests possible solutions for these problems. The present study authenticates the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) given by Davis (1989), and advocates how technology is facilitating English language teaching and learning on-line.

Limitations of the Study

The present study displays two limitations:

- It was carried out in the private sector school, where as if the same study is also carried out in the public sector, it might generate different findings
- This study was conducted on just one private sector institution; owever, the results would have varied with varying number of institutions and of participants

Competing Interest

The authors have declared no competing interest.

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