

Digital Integration of Active Learning in Saudi Arabia for TESOL Courses

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I. INTRODUCTION

The majority of secondary school Saudi students encounter various difficulties regarding learning English and achieving the target aims of each educational level. They do not have the opportunity to be active in their classes because of some personal and educational factors. On one hand, introverted learners do not want to be in the light, as they prefer keeping silent more than participating, due to the fear of making a mistake. On the other hand, the class environment, including time and available materials may prevent teachers from fully engaging their students and being able to encourage them to be active during the learning process. These challenges have affected students intensively both in receptive and productive English skills. This study, therefore, aims to create a safe atmosphere in which ESL students and teachers can overcome obstacles by integrating active learning norms to online services.

II. RESEARCH QUESTIONS

I believe in the seven norms of the active learning and in the obstacles facing them. Thus, I try to overcome these limitations by using the technology. In my point of view, answering the following questions leads to suggest an applicable method for making an active online ESL learning:

What is the degree of effectiveness of integrated online active learning compared to the face-to-face instruction in TESOL?

What are the best practices for integrated online learning in Saudi Arabia for teaching English to secondary school students?

What are the norms for making active learning efficient when integrated by teachers who practice TESOL in Saudi Arabia?

III. LITERATURE REVIEW

A. Active Learning

New trends in education shed light on what can be described as active learning, where students are inspired and motivated to be active and participate fully in the learning process. Active learning is a mode of learning in which the instructor attempts to engage the student's participation (student-centered approach) in the learning activities as suggested by Brown (2007). According to Keengwe, Onchwari and Agamba (2014), instructors are required to use

active learning strategies for their students. In addition, Keengwe, Onchwari and Agamba (2014), acknowledge that students understand more of what they are learning and retain the lesson content. Students become more aware of what they are being taught as a result of the teacher and student communicating ideas and goals (Barkley, 2014).

Ur and Alhaisoni (2013) showed various advantages associated with the use of active learning strategies while engaging in TESOL. According to this study, students can reach a respected level of thinking such as critical, synthetic and enthusiastic thinking. As they gain more positive attitudes toward their learning, they have increased levels of problem-solving abilities. Additionally, both the instructors and students share in their enthusiasm about learning (Ur & Alhaisoni, 2013). It is also important to note that active learning enhances the perception level of the students regarding how literate information is laid out. Different strategies and techniques emerge to enhance the different skills of learning English, including the main four: listening, reading, speaking and writing (Murphy, 2017).

However, it tends to be difficult for instructors to diversify content and teaching approaches. The difficulties come from the deficiency in teacher abilities regarding educational goals and the students' varied levels. Teachers who believe that the time of the conventional class learning period is not enough to impart understanding and knowledge have endorsed online courses and modules as means of supplementing class study.

B. Teaching English in Saudi Arabia

Online learning in English may present multiple opportunities for Saudi students studying English as a foreign language. Online learning allows students to learn the language in the comfort of their homes, and at the same time they can continue their regular routines of work (Al-Asmari & Khan, 2014). Since English is not the first language for most Saudi Arabian students, teachers should be considerate when formulating their lesson plans and teaching strategies.

When it comes to the process of integrating active learning norms and overcoming obstacles, the online services may assist ESL/EFL students to be more active in the learning processes by corresponding to some of their inherent interests, thereby making learning more enjoyable (Alshumaimeri, 2011); (Sun & Yang, 2015); (Al-Qahtani, 2013).

C. Online advantages vs. disadvantages

Researchers have different views regarding various advantages and disadvantages associated with online learning. Online academic approaches provide flexibility for students, as they can allow them to study at their convenience. (Simonson, Smaldino, & Zvacek, 2014). Another potential advantage is the ability for students to find materials on the Internet to be more relevant, and more likely to hook their attention than traditional texts (Laudon & Laudon, 2016). In addition, the online discussion platforms enable teachers to interact with students, which allows an exchange of their different thoughts and opinions (Rankan, 2010).

In their study, Eshghinejad and Gritter (2016) presented the attitude of both female and male students toward online learning of English as a foreign language. Through the administration of quantitative and qualitative methodologies, the authors acknowledged that there is a positive attitude toward online English learning. This is depicted through different elements such as emotional, cognitive, and behavioral factors. In addition, the researchers revealed that the capability of learners to master English as their second language through the online forums is greatly affected by the language skills and the learners' perceptions and attitudes (Eshghinejad & Gritter, 2016).

On the other hand, online learning reduces the levels of interaction between students and instructors, which may make it difficult for a student to obtain the maximum content offered for a given course (Haw et al., 2015). The students may develop poor communication skills as a result of not interacting with peers and teachers on a one-to-one basis. Therefore, they become incompetent in sharing their acquired information. According to Best and Kahn (2016), students going through the online learning system may develop adverse socialization limitations.

Finally, as noted by Agudo-Peregrina et al. (2014), it is also challenging to control problems such as cheating. This is because, in the online learning systems, students are placed far from examiners. The fact that student assessments are done through proxy systems encourages students to refer to materials which are not allowed in the assessments. In addition, online learning platforms may not recognize when students access other people's work and present that material during the assessments (Walliman, 2015).

IV. METHODOLOGY

The participants: 60 students; 4 teachers and the researcher.

The research work involved a practical experiment that entailed the navigation of the website "Thinkfic. Com" "<https://soltansschool.thinkific.com/manage/courses/208665>" as the online base, with the seven standards of active learning in Saudi Arabia (Figure 1). The website aims to integrate active learning norms with the online services to foster the achievement of the four learning skills based on the curriculum objectives for the participants.

The students were third-grade students from two Saudi secondary schools. They undertook English as a second language. Four teachers were invited to evaluate the process and detect the educational and technical gaps. My role was to collect and design materials that satisfied the course goals, focusing on kinesthetic, visual and auditory types of learners. The material was copied from the official book, MEGA GOALS 5 and 6. Each student created a student user account on the website to access various learning materials and interact with the tutor.

The learners had the chance to engage in active, spontaneous discussion as they went through the published content, and consequently learned how to interact with other users, including tutors, through the discussion panel. During the period, the students were being asked to perform several tasks that covered the general goals of the studied material. The formative assessments were mostly online quizzes. However, in the summative assessment, students were required to write a discursive essay related to the online course undertaken and a three-minute speech, according to traditional face-to-face evaluation. Furthermore, the online survey section and the face-to-face interviews were used to measure the satisfaction rate of the new method regarding the content, the personal factors, and self-evaluation. The study went on for three months, according to the structured plan that encompassed every unit.

V. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The results showed that the use of online teaching platform is motivational to the students. Results showed that 57 out of the 60 students sampled (95 percent) reported being motivated to learn when using the online platforms, indicating that online platforms do motivate students to pursue learning. Of the sampled students, 5% reported not having any preference between conventional or traditional sit-in classes to the online lessons. There was a consensus that the use of online platforms for learning improved their skills, as 90% of the sampled students reported gaining new knowledge and information during the process. Online learning appears to be quite effective in the dissemination of information and knowledge. The remaining 10% were unsure whether they gained worthwhile information during the time. During the assessment, 52 of the 60 students recorded high scores in both the summative and formative quizzes. The remaining 8 students recorded above-average scores in the assessment.

The interviews and survey section showed that the students appreciated the new method, as it made them feel relaxed and gave them a high level of self-confidence. In addition, this new method helped them to digest the content easier and faster. It was noticed that introverted students were able to increase their learning skills, helping them score highly in the productive skills. Moreover, the chosen candidates further invited fellow students to participate with them as they sought to engage on various matters or curriculum subjects.

VI. LIMITATIONS

This research was conducted with 60 students from two secondary schools in Saudi Arabia, Aseer province. The participants were all students in the third grade. The site used was well organized and served the educational demand of teaching English. Thus, the results are limited to the students of similar educational, technical and cultural contexts. This study does not include the all statistical results to satisfy the guidelines of the target journal regarding the length of the article.

lessons and make them accessible through online educational platforms.

However, there are some guide lines to be considered. First, the teacher should prepare a lesson plan that takes into account all the learners' needs. The lesson plan is significant, as it acts as a guide to both the tutor and the learners on the assignments and the timeframe for accomplishing various tasks. Second, the active online learning should not result in isolation of the face-to-face learning environment necessary to overcome social communication deficits or the expected issues involving the illegal answering of the assessments. Online learning should help comes to fill educational and psychological gaps, not seek to replace the traditional teaching system. Third, the seven norms could be applicable and measured by the attached checklist form of active online learning (Figure1).Fourth, the online services should support both smartphones and PCs and must be well organized and meet the new trends and need of TESOL.

VII. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

It can be concluded that the online active learning is beneficial and effective for both students and teachers in ESL learning. The remoteness of the learning model enables some students to avoid anxiety factors, as learning is in a neutral and socially safe environment. Based on the study described above and the analyzed literature, there is a need for tutors to prepare

Active Learning Standards	Online active learning norms	y/n
Students understand the objectives of the lesson.	List of objectives written in Arabic, either as questions or as notes.	
Students know their role in the lesson	They can choose their partners when they know what they have to do.	
The teacher facilitates the process only.	Online- based teaching enhances instant feedback and spontaneous discussions.	
Number of questions directed to each students	Same number to all students, at least 25 questions.	
Number of students` questions	Discussion panel gives students a valuable chance to ask questions.	
Distinguish audio,visual and kinesthetic learners.	Audio, video or written items are included in the course.	
Equivalent generated concepts by the students	Speaking and writing tasks for different linguistic settings.	
Students are able to reach high taxonomic levels of learning objectives.	Speaking and writing tasks present analysis, synthesis and Evaluation levels of objectives.	

Fig 1:- Active learning norms vs active online leaning norms

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