Introspecting the Impact of E-Learning Management Systems in English Language Teaching.

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Abstract
The impact of ICT in the field of language teaching and learning has bought e-learning management systems into the field of language teaching. This tremendous change has made the teaching-learning process completely different from the traditional ways of language teaching. Though ELMs have bought many positive changes in the field of teaching, this research work critically analyses the impact of ELMs in language teaching. The research also explores the pedagogical theories that underline language teaching and analyses whether the e-learning management systems follow the basic pedagogical principles of language teaching. This study has collected the perceptions of students regarding language teaching and learning via e-learning platforms. This article will help in understanding how effective is e-learning platforms in teaching language skills and the documentation of students' perceptions will help in improving the features and functionality of ELMs.
Keywords: ICT (Information and Communication Technology), ELMs(E-Learning Management Systems), Pedagogy.

Introduction:

The growing demand for the English language has accentuated the need for effective English language teaching strategies. It has also brought tremendous changes in the way the English language is taught and learned. Unlike many other disciplines, the English language teaching tradition has been subjected to numerous changes, especially throughout the twentieth century. It is the unsatisfactory learning outcomes and identification of the quality problems that kindled language teachers and researchers to experiment with numerous effective methods. However such methods never paved the way for a revolutionary change in the field of English language teaching as each method turns out to be a variant of existing methods with slight differences. Even though each method claims to be more updated and different than the previous method in reality most methods turn out to be a slight variant of the existing methods. In 1994, the attempt to shun method oriented language teaching fostered the birth of the post method era. Kumaravadivelu—the proponent of the revolutionary method considered 'the post method condition' as a result of 'the widespread dissatisfaction with the conventional concept of method'. In the post-method era, language teaching was not only restricted to a single method and the language teacher is free to use whatever eclectic methods and techniques were suitable for the classroom. The birth of the Post-method era has kindled numerous development in the field of language teaching

including the use of ICT oriented language teaching methods. This has made unprecedented changes in the field of teaching.

The advancement of Information and Communication technology has impacted the field of teaching and learning and it had made the teaching-learning process increasingly complex and widespread. The use of the latest technology means that one no longer needs to be located in a conventional classroom to be educated. Teaching and learning in the new era are done with the help of technology— e-learning. This research focuses more on how e-learning management systems make the language teaching and learning process effective and also the research tries to explore whether the e-learning management systems follow the pedagogical principles of language teaching. Document analysis and survey methods were used for the study.

Problem Statement

The impact of ICT in the field of language teaching and learning has bought e-learning management systems into the field of language teaching. The influence of technology in the field of language teaching has made the teaching-learning process completely different from the traditional language teaching methodologies. Though ELMs have bought many positive changes in the field of teaching, this research work critically analyses the impact of ELMs in language teaching. In addition to this, the research explores whether ELMs follow the pedagogical principles of ELT.

Significance

The current research is one of the very few studies which focuses exclusively on the influence of e-learning management systems in English language teaching. The research also explores the pedagogical theories that underline language teaching and analyses whether the e-learning management systems follow the basic pedagogical principles of language teaching. This study has collected the perceptions of students regarding language teaching and learning via e-learning platforms. This research will help in understanding how effective is e-learning platforms in teaching language skills and the documentation of students' perceptions will help in improving the features and functionality of ELMs.

Methodology

Methodology in research can be defined as the systematic method to resolve a research problem through data gathering using various techniques. In this research work, for exploring more into the objective of the study and resolving the problem of the research, the researcher has made use of document analysis and survey methods. The researcher analysed the documents, journals and books on learning management systems in ELT and the pedagogical aspects that underlie it. In addition to this, the researcher has conducted a survey to find out the perspectives of students and language instructors on learning management systems.

Objectives of the study

The following are the objectives of the study:

- To examine the tools that facilitate the learning of the English Language via e-learning platforms.
- To unveil the benefits and drawbacks of using e-learning as a platform for teaching the English language.
- To determine whether the e-learning management systems follow the pedagogical principles of ELT.

Research Questions

- What are the benefits of e-learning management systems in ELT?
- What are the shortcomings of e-learning management systems in ELT?
- Do e-learning management tools follow the pedagogical principles underlying English language teaching?

Limitations of the study.

The scope of the study is confirmed to the language learners in the state of Kerala who are familiar with e-learning management systems. The study focuses on the impact of ELMs in English language teaching.

E-Learning Management Systems in ELT:

Numerous new teaching strategies and technologies have evolved in the field of English language teaching as proficiency in the English language has become inevitable in all walks of life. Owing to this, the traditional language teaching methods have become outdated and many language learners are learning English in the corporate classrooms which facilitates them to face the changing world with utmost confidence.

ELMs foster the network-enabled transfer of skills and knowledge. It refers to the use of electronic applications and processes such as Web-based learning, computer-based learning, virtual classrooms and digital collaboration in the teaching and learning process. In other words, LMS functions as a bridge between instructors and distant learners and provides a well-organized platform for distance and blended education. Along with the increasing use of LMS, they are evolving rapidly based on the needs of web-based distance education and various features are being added to the LMSs to improve their functionality. In recent years there has been an explosion in the number of LMSs which facilitates an effective and comfortable teaching-learning process such as Google classrooms, MOODLE, Edmodo, MOOC, My School Books, Schoology, Blackboard Learn, Chamilo, Jhoolalms, Sakai.

Learning Management Systems and the Pedagogical Principles of Language Teaching:

Improving the teaching-learning process is the instructors' prime aim during the process of language teaching and to achieve this, most language instructors make use of technology. Also, the tremendous developments in the field of technology have made teaching activities more dependent on technology. However, technology is not the sole factor that makes the teaching-learning process interesting and effective. Pedagogy is an important issue that affects teaching-learning activities. To enhance the teaching-learning process, pedagogy should be given prime concern.

Technology and pedagogy should go hand in hand for making the teaching-learning process interesting and effective. Distance education systems depend on technology for administration, development, production, delivery of teaching materials and increasingly student-teacher interaction. For instance, one of the widely used learning management systems—MOODLE is developed to support a social constructionist epistemology of teaching and learning. The teaching and learning facilities provided by MOODLE are designed in such a way that it stands out from any other e-learning platforms as it provides pedagogical aspects that are not provided by other similar platforms. One of the major advantages of learning management systems is that it allows collaboration between learners. However, MOODLE offers more than this as it facilitates groups to see each other works. But Sakai does not support this feature and it allows file exchange only among the group members and not between other groups. Also, in a MOODLE environment, any participant can be a teacher as well as a learner. Among the other tools, it includes forums, resource management tools and quizzes. Experiences are important in constructivism and learning occurs through experience and MOODLE environment provides this experience with flexibility. For instance, MOODLE enables learners to use scales to rate or grade forums, assignments, quizzes, lessons, journals and workshops. Anyone who is grading or evaluating a student's work can use these scales. In addition to this, MOODLE facilitates users to keep detailed logs of all activities that users perform on the site. Even though Sakai has many features similar to MOODLE, it limits the instructor while designing the course. For example, Sakai does not support video communication or requires instructors to create a separate profile for each course. Each learning management system has its specific features. For

instance, Blackboard has certain features which do not exist in MOODLE environment such as a dropbox facility that supports users while working in different locations. This feature may be important in terms of content-learner interaction. Most learning management systems follow the pedagogy of teaching. For instance, most of the LMSs technology forums have a promise to provide learner-learner and learner-instructor interaction. And most learning management systems are specifically designed to teach specific subjects and skills. For instance, numerous learning management systems can be used successfully for language teaching. Among that many are specifically designed to enhance learners' different language skills. To enhance the writing skills of the learners an instructor can use numerous facilities offered by the learning management systems. For example, many learning management systems have specific features that help to build the vocabulary of language learners. Similarly, many learning management systems have features that strengthen the speaking skills of the learners. These LMSs also follow the pedagogical principles associated with the teaching of speaking and writing.

Thus, learning management systems are designed in such a way that it follows the basic pedagogical principles of teaching. However, the language instructor should choose a learning management system according to their need by taking considering all the specific features of the learning management system. For instance, if the instructor wants to give the students more control s/he should choose MOODLE and if the instructor prefers more teacher-centred instruction, then s/he should go for LMS such as Sakai, Blackboard and so on.

Data Analysis and Interpretation

The research shows that e-learning is regarded as having some pedagogical advantage over traditional face-to-face learning which can be extremely helpful in enhancing teaching and learning in a better way. These advantages and comfort e-learning provides over traditional classroom learning makes the e-learners experience more seamless and enjoyable. In the survey conducted for the research, respondents have vastly agreed with some of the conveniences e-learning provides. The majority of the respondents strongly agreed that e-learning is useful. It helps the students to accomplish learning tasks more quickly and also increases learning effectiveness. Altogether learners have a positive opinion of course content, design and the usefulness of hybrid learning. In addition to e-learning being regarded as useful, it also provides some conveniences and flexibilities for studying, which are not necessarily the case in face-to-face learning. Among the flexibilities e-learning provides is that it allows learners to study at their own pace and at their own time. This flexibility also gives the learners the convenience to pursue their programmes of study where and when they desire, in other words, the learners can study from any part of the world, without necessarily having to relocate to the institution's campus to get educated. Altogether e-learning management systems offer learner-friendly and efficient ways of language teaching. The survey proved that most of the learners' use of e-learning management systems supports the view that ELMs are capable of enhancing the writing and speaking skills of learners when compared to the traditional language teaching classrooms. Along with that, it is evident that ELMs follow the pedagogy of language teaching to a certain extent.

Conclusion

The major finding of this thesis is that e-learning is perceived to be effective and useful. This usefulness includes people being able to study from anywhere in the world without going out of their comfort zones. This element of convenience to learn from anywhere in the world becomes the prime advantage of e-learning over face-to-face learning. By making proper use of ELMs, the learners can gain benefits from both the traditional face-to-face learning as well as the technically aided modern learning. For instance, the possibility of having live lectures via synchronous tools and being able to get immediate feedback to

questions just as is done in the traditional classroom setting with the help of technological advancement.

The research also found that e-learning platforms and tools are perceived to be easy to use. The study also concludes that students have a very good ability to make use of the various tools and technologies that enable them to participate in e-learning with ease. It is indicated that good technological background is needed for students to be successful at e-learning because they need to have some level of comfort with using the computer and web technologies(Lee & Witta, 2001). The lack of technical knowledge posits a hindrance for students to participate in e-learning. Therefore this study shows that the majority of the students have commendable technical backgrounds that will enable them to effectively make use of the e-learning tools and it will kindle their e-learning experience without much hindrance. In addition to this, e-learning is regarded as having some pedagogical advantage over traditional face-to-face learning and this research showed that most of the e-learning management tools follow the traditional pedagogical principles of language teaching and this gives learners the benefits of both methods.

This study made the researcher understand the students' diverse attitudes towards e-learning. Most language learners like the idea of e-learning and also consider it to be an innovative and creative concept that needs to be encouraged and enhanced. Some of the respondents also consider e-learning methods as incapable of teaching and learning courses that have practical components. This research has also discovered the fact that all the respondents are willing to switch from the traditional classroom setting to e-learning methods and are willing to study through any of the e-learning modes in the future and not to continue their studies fully through traditional modes. By the end of the study, the researcher concluded that as the choice of learning mode is gradually being shifted from full classroom learning to e-learning, there should be a gradual preparation of both human resources and technical resources by educational institutions and in-service and preservice teacher training institutes to welcome this paradigm shift.

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APPENDIX
RESEARCH QUESTIONNAIRE

E-LEARNING MANAGEMENT SYSTEMS IN ELT

SECTION A: BIO-DATA

Age: 16-20 ☐   21-26 ☐   27-32 ☐   33-38 ☐   39+ ☐

Gender: Male ( )   Female ( )
Academic Level: Undergraduate ( ) PGD ( ) Master ( ) Ph.D. ( )   Others……..……..

SECTION B: FACTORS INFLUENCING THE USE OF LEARNING MANAGEMENT SYSTEMS IN ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHING

In this section, all items are measured on the following scale: 1=Strongly Disagree, 2=Disagree, 3= Neither agree nor disagree (Neutral), 4=Agree, 5=Strongly Agree.

Have you attended any English language courses where e-learning management systems were used as a mode of teaching?

YES ☐   NO ☐

If yes, what is the name of the Learning Management System you are familiar with?

Moodle ☐   Schoolology ☐   Edmodo ☐   Google Classroom ☐

Others ☐

S/N	Criteria	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree.
1	I find Learning Management System useful for learning the English language.					
2	Attending a course through an e-learning management system eliminates the time and space barriers.					
3	E-learning management systems are flexible to use and offer an easy adaptation of content and settings.					
4	It is inevitable to teach all English Language Courses through e-learning mode.					
5	Students lack seriousness in learning through e-learning.					
6	E-learning management systems are more costly and less easy to access.					
7	E-learning platforms are extremely helpful in enhancing the speaking skills of learners.					
8	The learner's performance in English speaking and writing will be better through e-learning mode than in the traditional classroom mode.					
9	E-learning is a better means of acquiring vocabulary.					
10	E-learning is a better means of developing English Language Grammar.					
11	E-learning management systems foster a student-centred approach to learning.					
12	E-learning is an enjoyable and interesting tool for learning the English language.					
13	There is no difference between traditional and e-learning modes of language teaching.					
14	E-learning is a better tool for testing and evaluation.					