

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF ONLINE TOOLS IN THE PROCESS OF
TEACHING AND LEARNING LANGUAGES

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Abstract: One way to teach foreign languages remotely is to exploit online learning platforms. The article investigates the effectiveness of online learning platforms in Foreign English language learning. The students from institutions of higher education were divided into two groups according to the online learning platform. The research finds that Tutor and Moodle platforms are effective in teaching English language remotely. The language competences have improved significantly. The study highlights the benefits of distance learning and advises universities on how to use that information to develop effective online learning programs that can later be implemented during crises. The study results can be used to organize the educational process with learning platforms.

Keywords: online platform; distance learning; English language; reading and listening; communicative competences;

The ever increasing globalization has caused a huge increase in the use of information and communication technology (ICT) in the educational sector which in turn has transformed the way of learning, training and teaching. The extensive use of the various digital technologies along with other suitable forms of learning materials has created an interactive, learner centered, open and flexible environment of online learning. The usefulness of online learning as an effective mode of teaching and learning has not only caught the attention of language educators and practitioners, but has also 'expanded their views on how to create student-oriented and open ended learning environments' [17], the two important aspects of the communicative language teaching. Communicative approach of language teaching which is considered as the most effective theoretical model since early 1970s demands natural language learning strategies and more open-ended types of activities, such as roleplays, information gap activities, and simulations in a communicative situation, in order to understand the potential communicative functions and social meanings of Manuscript received May 22, 2015; revised August 03, 2015. S. S. Jabeen is with the BITS Pilani, Dubai Campus, DIAC, Dubai, UAE phone: 00971503568318; fax: 0097144200555; e-mail: shazi@dubai.bitspilani.ac.in. A. J. Thomas was with BITS Pilani, Dubai Campus, DIAC, UAE. the linguistic forms [18]. However, research indicates that the communicative approach appears to have brought innovation more on the level of theory than on the level of actual classroom practices [6], [18]. Although challenging, it is necessary to overcome the shortcomings of the traditional language teaching and learning methods by integrating appropriate technologies and instructional strategies in the second or foreign language education field. Therefore, most teachers and students seem to feel that there is a need to make increased use of ICT, particularly computers, CD-ROM multimedia and the Internet in ESL/EFL. This is probably because they

think that these materials are flexible, interesting, and entertaining [3]. The Emirate of Dubai launched Dubai Electronic Government in 2001 as part of its initiative to transform itself into a Smart City. The aim of the e-government is not only to facilitate government operations and to provide effective government services, but also to facilitate various e-learning projects. As a consequence of this, several online learning programs have been launched by various educational institutions in the UAE including Hamdan Bin Mohammed Smart University in Dubai to meet an increasing demand of a more flexible learning environment in the country. According to Abdullah Karam [1], online learning is gaining momentum in the UAE due to the shortage of faculty and staff, the cultural background of male and female students, and the need to continue education. Although online learning system has become a major priority in the UAE [8], there is hardly any evidence of empirical examination of the effectiveness of online language learning. Therefore, it is essential to have a clear understanding of the factors that affect the quality of an online language learning system and are required for an effective implementation of the system. To create an effective, interactive, easily accessible, and distributed online learning system, institutions need to understand and investigate these factors that play a role in online language learning effectiveness. By studying current trends in online learning around the world and conducting a survey on the same, the current research intends to find out how effectively the online learning programmes are implemented and wants to comprehend the difficulties learners face while learning languages online. Simultaneously, the present study intends to assess whether the latest trends in web technology have been applied in today's teaching scenario, especially with respect to language learning. During the course of the study, the individual's learning of each of these language skills, i.e. reading, writing, speaking and listening was assessed for effectiveness. The study sought to obtain quantitative evidence on the potential effectiveness of VR in teaching Maltese. The majority of the participants, 19 out of 25 (76%), strongly agree that VR is effective for educational purposes. This indicates a high level of confidence and positive perception among the participants regarding the potential of VR in education. Additionally, 6 participants (24%) agree that VR is effective for educational purposes. This further supports the overall positive sentiment towards VR as an educational tool. It is noteworthy that none of the respondents expressed a neutral stance, disagreement, or strong disagreement regarding the effectiveness of VR for educational purposes.

The majority of the participants, 14 individuals (56% of the respondents), strongly agreed that VR is effective in facilitating language learning. Additionally, 11 participants (44% of the respondents) agreed with this statement. Notably, none of the respondents expressed a neutral, disagree, or strongly disagree opinion regarding the effectiveness of VR in language learning.

The participants were also asked to rate the positive impact of VR on students' learning outcomes based on their professional knowledge and experience, using a 5-point rating scale. The average score of 3.40 indicates that the majority of the participants were confident that using VR could significantly influence their students' learning outcomes. This assessment was somewhat based on their experience, despite not having implemented VR in their classrooms yet. Therefore, the risk of bias related to this question was minimal. The study's findings on the effectiveness of VR in language learning, as reported in [Parmaxi \(2023\)](#), provide compelling evidence for the potential of VR to improve ML2 teaching.

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