



Interactive Tools and Online Teaching: Exploring the Use of Interactive Tools during Online Teaching of ESL Learners

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Abstract

This study looked into how effectively interactive tools worked when teaching ESL to undergraduates online. The Technology Acceptance Model (TAM), a popular method for examining audience views and concluding the widespread implementation process, served as the theoretical foundation for this study. The quantitative approach was used to collect data in numbers to understand the effectiveness of applying interactive tools while providing instruction to ESL learners online. The qualitative method was used to acquire data through semi-structured interviews, which was necessary to learn about the effectiveness of using interactive tools and the learning experiences of ESL learners while teaching online. The study's target audience consisted of students from Lahore's three public institutions. To obtain quantitative data from 40-50 ESL undergraduates, a simple random sample approach was utilized, while qualitative data from 10 ESL undergraduates was collected. The results of this study indicate that ESL learners can only be effectively taught by teachers who choose and employ the right resources. The study recommended that universities give teachers and students comprehensive step-by-step directions on how to get acquainted with and utilize various interactive tools to learn significant language subject matter. The analysis of the data showed that using interactive tools to instruct second language learners online is successful.

Keywords: Interactive Tools, Online Teaching, Online Learning, ESL Learners



Introduction

Online learning was designed to facilitate teaching even without face-to-face meetings between learners and instructors (College & Kentnor, 2015). Online education research and methods have been promoted for a long time (Wu, 2021). Distance education has replaced face-to-face teaching, allowing students from all over the world to meet and converse in a structured learning setting (Casacchia et al., 2021). Teachers and students lacked experience with online instruction before the COVID-19 pandemic (Wu, 2021). According to Appana (2008), online learning is the use of interactive online tools and the World Wide Web to promote students' learning and present them with chances to acquire long-term learning, finances, and other matters. Online learning is a type of formal education that occurs when students and teachers are geographically and randomly separated. It is aided by communication tools such as media, camcorders, computers, and email. Restrictions include initial funding, strategy alignment, and student readiness (Subhashni Appana, 2008).

Online study and instruction have not yet evolved in the past, especially in less developed countries (Zalat et al., 2021). The COVID-19 epidemic forced a range of educational settings to close, which limited students' access to recreational opportunities. To address this, educational institutions must devise innovative solutions (Zalat et al., 2021). By enhancing online interactive activities, this closure ensured that education would not be adversely affected as a result of the lockdown. This study examined which interactive tools enable ESL learners to learn effectively online and the positive and negative aspects of using interactive tools for instructing undergraduate ESL learners online.

Literature Review

COVID-19 was declared a global epidemic on March 12, 2020, and the situation was controlled by solitary living. The majority of nations have statewide suspensions of educational institutions, which has an unfavorable impact on the education of many learners. Global classroom



teaching and learning processes were tracked during COVID-19. Technology can undoubtedly help in this respect (Ferri, Grifoni, & Guzzo, 2020).

ESL involves studying in circumstances when English is not the predominant language, but it is also taught in situations where English is used as a second language. A second language is any acquired language that is not the native tongue and is not widely spoken locally. The fundamental objective is to teach English as a second language, and research findings from one field can be used in another (WOLD, 2006). ESL students, according to Webster and Lu (2012), are those for whom English is not their first language (Paulson & Armstrong, 2010). Although English is the official language of the UN, Urdu is the national language of Pakistan. English is taught from primary education through graduate school, but the majority of people do not speak it as their first language. English is taught as a second language to Pakistani students (Adil, 2021). Although learning a second or foreign language is difficult, today's technology can help learners feel less anxious and uneasy. Fennel (2001) asserts that advances in technology must be seen as one of the needed competencies if English is to be termed a "killer" language (Kenning, 2007). For students learning English as a second language, technology can be employed more successfully than conventional language teaching (Haron et al., 2015).

Plenty of studies have been conducted on various aspects of online learning, but the student perspective on the value of using interactive tools when teaching ESL online has gotten the least attention. The efficacy of online learning has been studied at the secondary and intermediate levels, but there have been few official attempts to look at the usage of interactive tools during online instruction for ESL students at the college level. The efficiency of interactive platforms like WhatsApp, Zoom, and Google Meet for ESL students enrolling in online courses at Lahore's public institutions is also mostly unexplored. Understanding undergraduate ESL learners' attitudes toward online learning, how interactive tools operate for ESL learners, and how they might be employed in teaching methods is significant. This study's goal was to address a gap in the body of knowledge about the efficiency of interactive tools used in online instruction for ESL students enrolled in undergraduate programs at public universities in Lahore.



Methodology and Procedure

A mixed method approach combining qualitative and quantitative approaches was used for the data gathering and analysis in this study. The purpose of this study was to evaluate the efficacy of interactive tools for online ESL instruction. The study's participant group was made up of ESL undergraduate students from three public universities in Lahore, Pakistan. Quantitative data was gathered from 40–50 ESL undergraduates using the simple random sample approach, while qualitative data was gathered from 10 ESL undergraduates. Cronbach's Alpha reliability testing was used to assess the questionnaire's reliability. It was determined for two sorts of constructs: ESL learners' attitudes toward interactive tools and the effects of interactive tools on ESL learners. All of the multi-item constructs had very high internal reliability scores ($\alpha \geq 0.70$) (see Table 01).

Table 1. *Reliability Statistics*

Reliability Statistics		
Cronbach's Alpha	Cronbach's Alpha Based on Standardized Items	N of Items
.910	.911	24

For qualitative study, the face-to-face interviews provided empirical information based on the thematic analysis. Ten students were selected via simple random sampling and interviewed for the qualitative part. The interviews also included their preferred methods for learning languages, interactions with interactive tools, perspectives on learning before and after the outbreak of the pandemic, and the efficiency of utilizing interactive tools to learn the language. The qualitative information gathered from the interview was examined using thematic analysis.

The Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) was revised to create the theoretical basis for the investigation. A common approach for determining a subject's attitude before adoption is the technology acceptance model. Using this approach, the researchers were able to examine how well innovative teaching fit the study's objectives, paying close attention to three essential elements that



were important to ESL students: utility, usability, and enjoyment (Vladova, Ullrich, Bender & Gronau, 2021). The fundamental tenet of TAM is that a user's decision to embrace a technology is impacted by his behavioral intention, which is established by his assessment of its usability and simplicity of use (Wu, 2009).

Results and Discussion

Quantitative Results

Section 1: ESL Learners' Opinions about the Use of Interactive Tools

The first part of the questionnaire focused on how ESL students felt about using interactive tools. Eleven questions were posed to ESL students regarding their perceptions of the use of interactive gadgets. Table 2 provides the descriptive analysis' average mean score for these questions along with an explanation of the findings. Table 2 gives an account of the participants' perspectives regarding the use of interactive tools. The majority of the participants were satisfied that online learning is beneficial for students with an average value of 3.52. Similarly, the respondents expressed their convenience (mean value = 3.74) with the interactive tools that enable learners of ESL to access lectures at any time of day or night, enabling them to study when they are most focused and engaged. The average value of 3.20 indicates participants' moderate satisfaction when they were asked about their opinion regarding online talks being more interesting and comfortable than traditional classrooms. Respondents also felt moderately satisfied (mean value = 3.18) with the promotion of online learning in Pakistan for ESL learners. Respondents' opinion was also slightly inclined towards satisfaction with an average value of 3.12 regarding teachers' preparation for online lectures. The response to item 06 indicates that the participants are neutral in their opinion regarding the development and improvement of their learning skills through online learning. Interestingly, this response indicates participants' uncertainty towards the usefulness of online classes and/or interactive tools, whereas according to their response to



previous scale items, they find online learning sessions beneficial, interactive, and comfortable for students.

Table 2. *ESL Learners' Opinion about the Use of Interactive Tools*

Scale – 5: Very satisfied, 4: Satisfied, 3: Neutral, 2: Dissatisfied, 1: Very dissatisfied

		Mean	Std. Deviation
Q 1	Is Online learning beneficial for students?	3.52	.886
Q 2	Online classrooms as interactive tools	3.74	.922
Q 3	Online talks are more interesting and comfortable than traditional classrooms	3.20	.926
Q 4	Could online learning be promoted in Pakistan for ESL learners?	3.18	1.173
Q 5	Teacher is well-prepared for ESL students' lectures during an online class	3.12	.940
Q 6	Learners' ability to develop their learning skills significantly improved by online learning	3.00	1.178
Q 7	I can ask questions to clarify my thoughts during online lectures	3.44	1.110
Q 8	Interactive tools for ESL students provide input and allow educators and students to communicate more effectively and successfully	3.36	1.005
Q 9	Use of interactive tools is essential to overcome learners' barriers to speaking target language	3.46	1.199
Q 10	I appreciate adopting online interactive learning tools	3.46	1.164
Q 11	I like how students and teachers engage during online teaching and learning	3.20	1.069



Participants have also reported moderate satisfaction (mean value = 3.44) when it comes to asking questions and clarifying their thoughts during online sessions. Furthermore, the mean value of 3.36 suggests that the respondents are moderately satisfied with the use of interactive tools for ESL students as it allows educators and students to communicate more effectively and successfully. The majority of the participants are also of the view that the use of interactive tools is essential to overcome learners' barriers to speaking the target language (mean value = 3.46) and that they appreciate adopting online interactive tools (mean value = 3.46) as they can have access to learning content at any time of the day. The average value of 3.20 also shows participants' likeness towards the engagement between teachers and students during online learning and teaching. Overall, the responses to the majority of the statements indicate that participants are generally satisfied with the use of interactive tools during online sessions.

Section 2: Impact of Interactive Tools on ESL Learners

The questionnaire's final section asks about interactive tools' impact on ESL learners. It asks 13 questions on how interactive tools affect ESL students. Table 3 illustrates participants' opinions regarding the influence of interactive tools on ESL learners. The mean value of 2.54 indicates participants' moderate uncertainty regarding the productiveness of online education in comparison to traditional teaching. Most of the participants have also reported that they prefer traditional instruction to online instruction with an average value of 3.98. Respondents also moderately agree that the learners enhance strong social confidence during online learning (mean value = 3.30). However, participants are undecided whether the pandemic enhanced a learner's self-confidence with an average value of 3.06. The majority of the participants moderately agree with an average value of 3.56 that the interactive tools enable students to improve their language skills and they are useful in learning a new language (mean value = 3.84). Additionally, participants feel that responding to questions is simple while studying online (mean value = 3.46). This response corroborates participants' responses to previous item 07 (Table 02) where they indicated their satisfaction with the ease of asking questions during an online session. However,



the majority of participants are divided on whether studying English online is the most efficient way to do it (mean value = 3.10).

Table 3. *Impacts of Interactive Tools on ESL Learners*

Scale – 5: Strongly agree, 4: Agree, 3: Undecided, 2: Disagree, 1: Strongly disagree

		Mean	Std. Deviation
Q 12	Online education is just as productive as traditional teaching	2.54	1.265
Q 13	Traditional instruction is preferable to online instruction	3.98	.869
Q 14	During online learning, learners enhance strong social confidence	3.30	.995
Q 15	Did the epidemic enhance a learner's self-confidence	3.06	1.114
Q 16	Interactive tools enable students to improve their language skills	3.56	.972
Q 17	Usefulness of interactive tools for learning a language	3.84	.866
Q 18	The process of answering a question	3.46	1.129
Q 19	effectiveness of online learning to learn English as a second language	3.10	1.055
Q 20	lack of attention	4.02	1.097
Q 21	Social and emotional issues during online classes	3.82	1.119
Q 22	Equal and active participation of learners	2.48	1.266
Q 23	Ease of understanding the instructor's directions	3.10	1.199
Q 24	Language learning requirements can be met through online teaching using interactive tools	3.48	.909

Furthermore, the average value of 4.02 illustrates that most of the participants agree that students do not pay attention to lectures during an online class. The social and emotional challenges



that students have when learning online were the subject of item 21. Participants' response was positively inclined towards agreement (mean value = 3.82) regarding social and emotional challenges that students encounter during online sessions. Similarly, the average value of 2.48 shows that the participants' response is moderately inclined towards uncertainty regarding the equal and active participation of learners in online learning sessions. The majority of the participants are also undecided regarding the ease of understanding the instructors' directions during online learning sessions (mean value = 3.10). However, with an average score of 3.48, the majority of participants only modestly concur that the conditions for language acquisition may be reached by interactive online instruction.

Qualitative Analysis

Numerous ESL participants claimed, according to the qualitative analysis, that they were unfamiliar with any interactive language learning methods before the pandemic. "I'm used to taking classes in person, so I had no idea about online education or anything like," remarked one of the participants. "For me, it was a unique experience" (Personal communication from Participant 10 on December 29, 2021). Another ESL participant noted, "I used Google and YouTube as online interactive tools." Only four of the 10 ESL participants had prior experience with Google Meet, Zoom, or any other interactive learning technologies. The remaining ESL members were unfamiliar with Zoom, Google Meet, and other such apps because they had never used interactive tools before the pandemic. The six-step theme analysis methodology developed by Braun and Clarke (2006) has been used to develop the first topic-based, cutting-edge ESL learning experience with interactive technologies.

Effective Interactive Tool/s. The usefulness of the interactive tool(s) that students utilized for online classrooms was something the researchers were interested in learning about. Almost all ESL participants claimed they utilized Google Meet and Zoom for interactive online classes. Participant 5 stated, "I used Google Meet for certain classes and Zoom for a few classes because 2-3 instructors insisted on it (personal correspondence, December 29, 2021). Two themes emerged from the



responses of the students when the data was coded: productivity and satisfaction. During COVID, the majority of ESL participants admitted to utilizing Google Meet and other interactive tools for online learning. ESL respondents used words like "satisfied," "enjoyable," "convenient," and "helpful" to characterize the online tools, showing that they were not only happy with their use but also considered the products to be enjoyable to use.

Learner's Perception of Interactive Tools. The third question from the semi-structured interview focused on the learner's viewpoint on interactive tools and their judgments of the usefulness of this new method of language teaching and learning that employs interactive technologies rather than typical classroom settings. According to one participant, the productivity of conventional classrooms cannot be underestimated, and the usage and growth of online education platforms are expressly designed to build new ways of acquiring knowledge and experiences (Participant 9, personal correspondence, December 29, 2021). Another participant said she enjoyed using the interactive features of Pandemic because it allowed students to ask any question they had about the course at any time. Additionally, they might bring the lectures that were taped. On the other hand, children in a traditional classroom tend to be more disciplined, focused, and serious in their physical education lessons. The opinions of the participants influenced the creation of guiding principles for employing interactive technologies for online learning, including optimism, efficacy, acceptance, advancement, and flexibility.

Impact on ESL Learners. The fourth semi-structured interview topic was about how interactive tools affect ESL students, specifically what differences they noticed while switching from traditional face-to-face classrooms to online instruction. Participant 1 in the study said, "During the online sessions, I saw that I could effortlessly convey my point, contribute without trepidation, and confidently deliver my presentation" (personal communication, December 29, 2021). According to a different participant, "Although it was initially challenging to focus in an online learning environment, it now seems to be more effective than in conventional settings" (Participant 6, personal correspondence, December 30, 2021). On the other hand, one participant claimed that although they initially found the new online method difficult to understand, they gradually adapted



to it. According to a participant, more than lecturers, she acquired guidance from YouTube and Google (Participant 1, personal discussion, December 29, 2021). The interviewers suggested that there were enough interactive online materials to help us get through the online courses. As a consequence, employing interactive learning tools evoked a variety of emotions from participants.

Discussion

Which interactive tools allow ESL students to learn English online effectively?

The majority of ESL respondents agreed that using interactive tools while studying online is effective, which was the initial topic for the research provided by the university ESL students. This shows that interactive tools for online learning are easy to use and administer for ESL undergraduates. This finding is in line with Kaur et al. (2020) study where they suggest that on Youtube, teachers can upload video lectures based on important topics covered in the English language curriculum for students to access. Contrary to it the study's results depict that Google Meet, according to ESL participants, provides a user-friendly interactive tool that makes online learning interesting and adaptive. By utilizing Google Meet, students were able to efficiently personalize their learning by studying the same material in a variety of formats, such as simulations or movies. According to the ESL respondents, using Google Meet improved ESL students' learning in class and helped learners comprehend lecture material. English as a second language learners considered it simple to participate in more discussion sessions using Google Meet. ESL students were able to participate wholeheartedly in classes through Google Meet. Taking advantage of Google Meet boosted the ESL students' confidence in their ability to overcome language obstacles.

In what ways do ESL students at public universities in Pakistan use interactive tools to study English?

The qualitative and quantitative data demonstrate that throughout the pandemic, ESL learners profited from online education using Google Meet and other interactive tools, which was the focus of the second study question. Similarly, the research finding shows that the majority of ESL



respondents claimed that with an online interactive tool rather than in a traditional classroom, meaningful conversations were more comfortable and captivating. Most ESL students have 24/7 access to instructors via modern technology. Allowing people to learn when they are most attentive and engaged in online classes. The majority of participants also agreed that ESL learners should be given online training using various interactive technologies at all levels of education in Pakistan. The majority of ESL students stated that they could use a variety of interactive tools during online lectures to clarify their ideas or ask questions. In order to help in online classes, ESL students overcome their communication challenges. This study's findings suggest combining social networking and videoconferencing interactive tools. This finding is similar to Nguyen's (2015) research which shows that the possibility of offering such a top-notch academic achievement to anyone with internet access, its effectiveness in delivering education, its use as professional learning, its cost-effectiveness in overcoming rapidly rising higher education costs, credit intimidation at the postgraduate level, and the ability to offer a top-notch instruction to anyone with internet access are just a few of the most important advantages.

The respondents had a mixed response to the final study question, which asked, ***What are the positive and negative aspects of using interactive tools for instructing undergraduate ESL learners online?*** While the majority of ESL students said that traditional education was superior to online learning, some claimed that online education was not as successful as traditional instruction. However, the findings suggest that there may be some advantages to using interactive tools in online teaching. Online training using interactive tools can meet the language learning needs of ESL respondents. Opposing to this finding, Mubaslat (2012) found in his research that online learning entails a higher level of educational participation and interaction than traditional learning. Numerous authors have observed that students who have completed any program through an interactive or digital medium showed higher levels of engagement. The level of interaction in an online classroom had a considerable influence on learners' viewpoints and perceptions

As a result, the vast majority of the students who participated in this research thought that using a variety of interactive devices was fun. The findings showed that although online learning



for ESL students initially proved challenging due to the fact that some of them had never used an interactive tool before, it eventually became easier. The best feature was that ESL students could use interactive technologies to access recorded lectures on each subject. Comparing interactive technologies to traditional classroom settings, the participants found that because interactive tools offer them audio, video, and language capacities, they are much superior to traditional ones. According to the study, any new system initially seems tough to understand but one eventually becomes accustomed to it.

Conclusion & Recommendations

According to the results of this study, Google Meet is a user-friendly interactive tool that makes online learning interesting and adaptable. Google Meet helped ESL students learn more in the classroom and remember the course information. The ESL pupils' confidence in overcoming language barriers was boosted via Google Meet. Pakistan should encourage the use of interactive technologies in online learning for ESL students. It is highlighted that interactive technologies have been consciously chosen by the world for use in online ESL learning. Given that Pakistan has only chosen necessity-based circumstances under the pandemic COVID-19 situation, the government of Pakistan is strongly recommended to develop a comprehensive plan for incorporating the use of interactive tools throughout distance education for ESL learners, not only at the higher education levels but also at the additional, basic, and elementary levels. This is because Pakistan has only chosen the need-based situation. It is appropriate to provide equal weight to the use of interactive technologies during online instruction for ESL students. In order to provide ESL students with an online education, universities, institutions, and schools ought to have access to the Internet and cutting-edge technology. Students and instructors, particularly learners of ESL, ought to acquire comprehensive instruction while using interactive tools for participatory online educational activities.

The main limitation of the study is the emphasis it places on the public sector institutions only; this suggests further research on ESL learning difficulties using online interactive tools from



different universities i.e., public and private both. The limited sample size, the participants' incompetence, and the technique of data collection are further limitations. Due to COVID-19 constraints, face-to-face interviews were not allowed, and the study was conducted only at public sector universities. Due to the limited sample size, the use of public institutes, and the presumption that English language learners had the same issues and received the same instructions, it's possible that the results cannot be applied generally. By enabling video and audio conferencing, chats, and webinars, online learning improves communication between instructors and students. The findings from the study are significant for institutions, policymakers, and ESL education in critical circumstances.

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