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An Investigation on Students-Instructors' Interaction in Online Learning Environment: A Survey among ESL Students

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Abstract

As interaction is required in the online learning environment, it emphasizes that the most important key to create an interactive online language learning is the initiation of interaction by the instructors. The use of technology has made it possible to have more fascinating and productive teaching and learning process, particularly in language learning. Thus, when students and instructors engage, there is a chance for an educational transaction to occur. However, it remains unclear the action and reactions take places during the teaching and learning process. This leads to a question on how the teaching and learning process will be balanced between the instructors and the students. Hence, this study was carried out to investigate the students-instructors interaction in online learning as interaction is needed in learning environment. This study used a quantitative method through survey, with data obtained via an online questionnaire. The respondents were 40 ESL Postgraduate students enrolled in online learning at public university in Malaysia. Data collected were analysed using Statistical Package Social Science (SPSS) version 26. It also been presented in the form of frequency, percentage and mean scores. The findings revealed the students-instructor interaction is vital and ESL students had positive respond towards it. Most of the students believe that in online learning most of the instructors have good content of knowledge ($M = 4.50$). This shows their instructors still manage to engage with the students and did a lot of preparation in order to transfer the knowledge. Besides, future research could further explore on the gender of the instructors which it might have any effects on students interaction in online learning. It could contribute to a deeper understanding on the influence of instructor towards students interaction.

Keywords: Interaction, Students-Instructors, Online Learning, English as Second Language (ESL).

Introduction

In today's digital world, the concept of interaction is widely used in the design of online learning environments, just as it has been for centuries in the design of educational settings. Interaction is vitally important for many different reasons in the context of online education transactions. Goyak et al (2021) stated that the use of information and communications

technology into educational settings enables students and educators to interact with one another.

Besides, both instructors and students can utilise technology to enhance language-learning. In order for students-instructor to interact with one another, students might use their electronic devices, such as smartphones or laptops, to do something productive and meaningful. As stated by Fauzi et al (2022), that video conferencing platforms like Google Meet, Zoom, Skype, and WebEx, as well as Learning Management Systems (LMS) like Google Classroom, Padlet, Moodle, and social media apps like Facebook, WhatsApp, Telegram, and YouTube are utilised in order to fulfil the demand for online education.

A significant number of educational establishments in Malaysia have made the decision to use online because they are convinced of its efficacy as an alternative method of instruction to more traditional methods of information dissemination in the classroom (Ismail et al., 2021). Hence, classrooms are being remodelled and reinvented in a variety of ways to meet the increasing demands of modern digital learners as technology advances. According to Martin (2018), the usage of numerous student-instructor communication channels may have a strong relationship with student engagement. It is recommended that online instructors pay close attention to student-instructor interactions since they have the potential to influence learning outcomes. However, it remains unclear the action and reactions take place during the teaching and learning process. Particularly when it comes to implementation and use.

It is vital for students-instructors interaction in online learning as interaction is needed in learning environment. This study, therefore, attempts to shed lights on the students-instructors' interaction in online learning environment among ESL students. There is a lot of interest in this topic because the shift to online learning has turned into a discussion about how students and instructors interact. Therefore, this study attempt to investigate the role of instructor that influence students interaction in online learning.

Literature Review

Online Learning

Globally, educational institutions are currently embracing online learning to provide students with continual education. Learning through traditional methods is not the same as learning through e-learning. According to Huang (2021), nations all over the world have devoted a significant number of people, material resources, and financial resources to the use of information and communication technologies. As a result, new opportunities to alter the form and content of learning have emerged as a direct result. Moreover, educators and instructors have access to a wide variety of teaching and learning methodologies, which may be implemented with the help of technology and also a social network to guarantee that instruction goes according to plan (Ramli, 2022).

Hence, when it comes to online learning, it always involved with the use of technology as a medium for learning. Besides, E-learning also tend to reduces barriers of time and space, allowing the user to access a wide range of knowledge, enables cooperation, encourages students to communicate with their peers, discuss and exchange points of view and ideas (Arkorful, 2014).

Goyak et al. (2021) stated that the use of information and communications technology into educational settings enables students and educators to interact with one another. Therefore, students typically have access to learning materials online through the platform that is supplied to them which may include recorded lectures, online presentations, reading lists, activities, assignments, and others (Stauffer, 2020). Thus, Azira (2021) emphasised the fact that the instructor or educator may employ the interactive technology platform in order to cultivate an effective learning environment.

The Use of Technology in Esl Setting

Rapid advancement of technology brings an impact on many facets of human life. The advancement of technology has increased the variety of options for enhancing language learning at all educational levels. In this digital age, technology has been demonstrated to be one of the aspects promoting teaching and learning in the classroom. According to Yunus (2018) highlighted that a wide variety of technologies are now available for language learning and teaching, and their implementation in the classroom has become an essential aspect of students' language development in the 21st century.

Dewi (2019), technology allows students to take charge of their own learning, allowing them to work at their own pace and in a safe setting where mistakes can be remedied and detailed feedback can be offered. Thus, Alqahtani (2019) argued that technology is extremely important as a teaching and auxiliary tool, and its use could improve the content of and delivery of pedagogies. Furthermore, the key to the successful technology in a teaching and learning session does not just depend in the software or hardware that is used but also in instructors ability to plan, design, and implement active language learning activities that are interesting for students (Abunowara, 2016).

As mentioned by Assaiqeli et. al (2022) stated Telegram, WhatsApp, Google Classroom, and Zoom were some of the communication tools that the ESL instructors utilized to ensure that the teaching and learning process went according to plan meanwhile the instructors utilized a variety of learning tools such as Quizziz, Padlet, and Kahoot to guarantee that the students were able to demonstrate knowledge of the material by the time the class was over. In addition, students can improve their language skills by using resources like Google Translate and Grammar Checker, rather than relying entirely on classroom instructions (Bailey & Lee, 2020).

New-generation technology gives students a natural framework for student autonomy, student identity, new language use, and motivation to develop new collaborative and interaction opportunities between instructors and students (Murray, 2005). In addition, according to Tomlinson (2009) multimedia and a wide range of websites help students learn more and retain that information.

Students-Instructors' Interaction

Student to instructors interaction occur is when students and instructor engage in the classroom, they are able to impart knowledge and skills to one another. The success of a teaching and learning process depends heavily on student-instructor interaction in the classroom. According to Moore (2016), highlighted that interaction takes place when a instructor gives information, comments, encouragement, or assistance to a student. It also takes place when a student communicates with an instructor about the course by asking questions or communicating to them about it.

Thus, when students and instructors engage, there is a chance for an educational transaction to occur. According to Ariska (2018) mentioned there must be interaction between instructors and students during the learning process. Education is fundamentally an interaction between instructors and students in order to achieve educational objectives. In addition, based on Shaharim and Abdullah (2017), interaction between instructors and students helps to foster a positive environment and positive student-instructor interactions in the classroom, which in turn contributes to the efficiency of the students' learning.

In these rapid technological advancements, educators now can use a wider range of instructional materials and tools compared to before (Blankson, 2006). Interaction between instructors and students can be achieved through the utilisation of educational as well as synchronous and asynchronous media, including audio-visual and multimedia tools in the form of telephones, Skype, and other communication tools. (Blankson, 2016). In order to complete a task or assignment, online students must use tools and resources that they can manage (Hillman et al., 1994). Moreover, to boost online learning, students and instructors in online courses must cooperate and collaborate (King, 2014).

According to Moore, instructor provide knowledge, exhibit their abilities, and model specific ideals and attitudes (2016). He also mentioned that instructors offer guidance, support, and encouragement to each student, however the quantity and nature of this support differs according to the educational level of the students and other factors that are taken into consideration. Thus, online educators should pay close attention to student-instructor interactions because they can impact students' academic achievement (Dixson, 2010).

Methodology

This study employed to investigate the students-instructors interaction in online learning and the survey study was a quantitative method. The total number of respondents that participated of this research was 40 ESL postgraduates' students from one of the public universities in Malaysia, National University of Malaysia (UKM). These students were from Faculty of Education that major in Master of Education in Teaching English as Second Language (TESL). Therefore, the technique sampling used was purposive sampling to select the targeted respondents which has experienced online learning. The instrument of this survey were adapted from Sharma et al (2020); Cole et al (2014) that was related to online learning. The survey questionnaires consist two sections, which were Section A consists of the demographic. For Section B it was related to the role of instructors that influence students interaction in online learning. All questionnaire items were measured using 5-point Likert scale ranging from "strongly disagree" to "strongly agree". It was administered to all the participants. For data collection, 40 online survey has been distributed to the respondents using Google Form. The link of the questionnaires was distributed through WhatsApp Application and Telegram Application. Hence, the data was analysed using Statistical Package of Social Sciences (SPSS) version 26. In descriptive analysis, mean, percentage and frequency were used. The obtained results were used to answer the main objective of this research.

Findings

In this section, the researcher going to present about students demographic and the role of instructor that influence students interaction in online learning which lead to the objective of the paper. The data was tabulated and justified as shown in Table 1.1 and Table 1.2.

Table 1.1
Students' Demographic

	Frequency (N)	Percentage (%)
Gender		
Male	9	22.5
Female	31	77.5
Have you experienced online learning?		
Yes	40	100.0
No	0	0.00
Class Participation		
Wifi	19	47.5
Data Package	3	7.5
Both	18	45.0

Referring to table 1.1, Section A was related to students demographic. Data were collected from 40 students from public university. Out of 40 respondents, there were 31 (77.5%) female and 9 (22.5%) male that participated for this survey study. Based on the data above, all of the respondents 40 (100%) has experienced online learning during their studies. Hence, from the table it shows that most of the students participated online classes through Wi-Fi, 19 (47.5) and only 3 (7.5%) used data package. Meanwhile, 18 (45.0%) used both Wi-Fi and data package to participate on online learning.

Table 1.2
The Role Of Instructor That Influence Students Interaction In Online Learning

Statements	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	Mean (M)
I feel that my lecturers have good content knowledge	0 (0.00)	0 (0.00)	1 (2.5)	17 (42.5)	22 (55.0)	4.53
I feel that my lecturers provide opportunities to ask questions	0 (0.00)	0 (0.00)	1 (2.5)	26 (65.0)	13 (32.5)	4.30
I feel that my lecturers treated me with respect	0 (0.00)	0 (0.00)	3 (7.5)	23 (57.5)	14 (35.0)	4.28
I feel that my lecturers understood my learning needs	0 (0.00)	2 (5.0)	4 (10.0)	24 (60.0)	10 (25.0)	4.05
I feel that my lecturers made the subject as interesting as possible	0 (0.00)	1 (2.5)	5 (12.5)	31 (77.5)	3 (7.5)	3.90
I feel the response time from lecturers is quicker in online courses	0 (0.00)	4 (10.0)	14 (35.0)	17 (42.5)	5 (12.5)	3.58
I am satisfied with lecturers in providing clear instructions	0 (0.00)	1 (2.5)	8 (20.0)	24 (60.0)	7 (17.5)	3.93

I am satisfied with the lecturer's accessibility during the class	0 (0.00)	0 (0.00)	2 (5.0)	23 (57.5)	15 (37.5)	4.33
I am satisfied with the lecturers' pace and punctuality	0 (0.00)	0 (0.00)	3 (7.5)	31 (77.5)	6 (15.0)	4.08
I am satisfied with the lecturers in reviewing the topic covered in the previous sessions	0 (0.00)	0 (0.00)	7 (17.5)	28 (70.0)	5 (12.5)	3.95
I am satisfied with the lecturers' supportiveness towards my questions	0 (0.00)	0 (0.00)	2 (5.0)	20 (50.0)	18 (45.0)	4.40
I am satisfied with the lecturers' responsiveness towards my questions	0 (0.00)	0 (0.00)	1 (2.5)	23 (57.5)	16 (40.0)	4.38
I am satisfied with the quality of graphic aids such as sound and picture (ppt) being displayed by lecturers	0 (0.00)	0 (0.00)	7 (17.5)	20 (50.0)	13 (32.5)	4.15
Overall						4.14

Referring to table 1.2, this results refers to the primary goal of the study which to investigate the role of instructor that influence students interaction in online learning. Based on Table 1.2 demonstrates the highest mean value was *"I feel that my lecturers have good content knowledge"* ($M= 4.53$). This shows that 22 (55%) Strongly Agree with this statement, meanwhile 17 (42.5%) Agree and only 1 (2.5%) chose Neutral. Apart from that, the lowest mean value was *"I feel the response time from lecturers is quicker in online courses"* ($M= 3.58$). From the table, 5 (12.5%) students Strongly Agree, 17 (42.5%) Agree, 14 (35%) Neutral and 4 (10%) of the students Disagree with the statement. Hence, this study shown the overall mean value for this study was ($M= 4.14$). Based on Moidunny (2009), this can be categorised as in High level of mean score.

Discussion

Based on the findings, it shows that the role of instructor does influence students interaction in online learning. It can be seen that most of the students believe that in online learning most of the instructors have good content of knowledge since this item has the highest frequency, percentage and mean compared to the others. Students believe that even they did not have face-to-face lesson, their instructors still manage to engage with the students and did a lot of preparation in order to transfer the knowledge. According to Moore, instructors provide knowledge, exhibit their abilities, and model specific ideals and attitudes (2016). In addition, online educators should pay close attention to student-instructor interactions because they can impact students' academic achievement (Dixson, 2010).

Besides, Instructors that have good knowledge could help students to learn the best ways and increase students engagement in online learning. But somehow instructors also need to make sure that they did not spoon feed the students because nowadays some of the students tend to hide behind the camera and pretend they listen. Based on Allwright (1982), instructor who "work" too much in the classroom are not doing a good job of teaching their students. He also added that a successful language instructor is able to encourage students to do more work when they are in the classroom.

Apart from that, it also can be seen from the Table 1.2 that the lowest mean was pointed out to the response time from lecturer in online courses. From here, it can be seen that a few of

the students did not agree with this statement. When it comes to online learning, this issue somehow always become a hot topic. According to Kumar (2021), due to this issue students might lost their learning opportunities, and poor ones are allowed to continue unaddressed. In digital classes, response from instructors is an important component of teaching and learning environment. Providing respond to students is all about encouraging the students to accept, analyse, learn and apply the knowledge in a way that ideally led to positive changes (Obilor, 2019).

Conclusion

The presence study is set out to investigate the students-instructors interaction in online learning among ESL students. The study found that generally the role of instructor does influence students interaction in online learning. It can be found that most of the students believe in online learning most of the instructors must have good content of knowledge. Hence, the result of this research support the idea that students-instructor interaction is vital in online learning which consistent with the other previous studies. This show that the level of interaction among students-instructors is a significant factor in determining the level of academic success and commitment to studying. Besides, it also reveals that the role of instructors is important in online learning. In online learning, student interaction is complemented by instructor facilitation and support to make sure of students educational achievement. Even though students shows positive respond towards their students-instructor interaction in their learning, somehow there is a limitation for this study.

This study was limited by the absence of the certain instruments. Which it was only conducted through online survey, and in order to see the real interaction that happen in online learning, online classroom observation should be done. In spite of its limitation the study certainly adds to the understanding of the important role of instructor does influence students interaction which most of the students has positive respond. This shows that it has fulfil the research objective of this research study. Further research could usefully explore on the gender of the instructors which it might have any effects on students interaction in online learning and use a larger number of samples. Moreover, the findings of this study have numbers of important implications for future practices. Firstly, this study encourage instructors to implement positive role in online learning since not all students find that online learning bring benefits to them because it was totally different with the traditional method. Besides, it may create interactive learning opportunities for students and support their learning environment.

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