

 ISSN NO. 2320-5407	Journal Homepage: www.journalijar.com INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF ADVANCED RESEARCH (IJAR) Article DOI: 10.21474/IJAR01/11774 DOI URL: http://dx.doi.org/10.21474/IJAR01/11774	 INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF ADVANCED RESEARCH (IJAR) ISSN 2320-5407 Journal Homepage: http://www.journalijar.com Article DOI: 10.21474/IJAR01/11774
---	--	--

RESEARCH ARTICLE

STUDENTS' PERSPECTIVES IN COVID-19 OUTBREAK'S TIME: LEARNING ENGLISH IN ONLINE CLASS OR IN FACE-TO-FACE CLASS?

Pham Thi Anh Dao, Nguyen Trinh to Anh and Pham Van Chien

Lecturers of Foreign Languages Department, Sai Gon University, 273 An Duong Vuong St., Ward 3, District 5, Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam.

Manuscript Info

Manuscript History

Received: 25 July 2020

Final Accepted: 28 August 2020

Published: September 2020

Key words:-

Face-To-Face, Online Learning, Learn English, Benefits, Drawbacks, Sai Gon University

Abstract

After two months of online learning, students of Sai Gon University in Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam could gain recognition of benefits and drawbacks of online learning in comparison with face-to-face learning. This article shows which learning mode was preferred more and the reasons by students of the university through a survey of 180 undergraduates from six general English classes. As a result, the number of participants who chose face-to-face mode was the same as that of who preferred online learning. The explanations of face-to-face learning voters were face-to-face interactions, less distraction factors, better environment for communication skill practice and more various learning activities. Flexibility of learning place and time, comfort and accessible online materials and lecture notes were the reasons for the online learning voters. A few participants could not decide their favorite mode of learning since both had their own outstanding benefits.

Copy Right, IJAR, 2020,. All rights reserved.

Introduction:-

Even though a number of lecturers of Sai Gon University – a state university – have been using online materials and tools to support their teaching and students, the application of online learning by all faculties of the university was not in sync until May 2020. The requirement of social distancing against the spread of Covid-19 promoted the advantages of online learning much more than ever. The students had to learn all subjects online during two months from the beginning of March to the end of April 2020. Therefore, the advantages and disadvantages of online learning in comparison with face-to-face learning have been experienced by the students of Sai Gon University.

Although there were a lot of researches into the topic of online learning in Vietnam and in other countries, the research on students' attitudes toward online learning and a comparison between online and face-to-face learning has been rare at Sai Gon University. It led to our research to explore which learning mode – face-to-face or online learning that students of our university prefer more and their reasons. The research question was "Do you prefer to learn English in an online class or in a face-to-face classroom? Why?"

If informants choose face-to-face modes, we will look at its advantages to supplement the inefficiency of teaching online. Furthermore, disadvantages of online class could also be identified from students' viewpoints to be adjusted. On the other hand, if informants vote for online class, its advantages will be the ground for English teachers to enhance their teaching.

Corresponding Author:- Pham Thi Anh Dao

Address:- Lecturers of Foreign Languages Department, Sai Gon University, 273 An Duong Vuong St., Ward 3, District 5, Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam.

Literature Review:-

Thanks to reviewing a number of articles involved in comparisons between online learning and face-to-face learning, we had a grounding for our research.

Firstly, the article “An Investigation of Vietnamese Students’ Learning Styles in Online Language Learning” by Nguyen Ngoc Vu (2016) from HCM City – University of Education explored the opinions of students in a number of online language classes and any obstacles that students might have when transferring to the new learning mode. In the findings, the participants were satisfied with online learning even though many of them had difficulties in lack of authentic interaction and bad computer skill. Therefore, teachers need to hold courses to instruct their students how to use online learning tools to optimize students’ online learning.

The second article “Face-To-Face or E-Learning in Turkish EFL Context” was written by Ekrem Solak and Recep Cakir from Amasya University, Amasya, Turkey(2014). The researchers concluded that the learners’ satisfaction of both face-to-face learning and online learning of English were the same. Moreover, the differences in learning performance and genders did not influence the comparison between two learning modes of English.

Thirdly, the article “Face-to-face or face-to-screen? Undergraduates’ opinions and test performance in classroom vs. online learning” by Nenagh Kemp and Rachel Grieve, Discipline of Psychology, School of Medicine, University of Tasmania, Hobart, TAS, Australia (2014). Students liked online learning because of its flexibility while they also enjoyed learning face-to-face thanks to authentic discussions and feedback. Both online and face-to-face learning tasks resulted the same learning performance. Helping students receive advantaged of both learning modes was the job of course developers.

The fourth article “Is Online Learning Suitable for All English Language Students?” was written by Settha Kuama, Usa Intharaksa, Prince of Songkla University (2016). The research resulted that not all students of English language were suitable for online learning. That meant weak learners of English were not good at online learning skills and had poor experiences in self-study. Hence, these learners might not be available for online learning of English.

Fifthly, the article “Comparing Online English Language Learning and Face-to-Face English Language Learning at El Bosque University in Colombia” by Marta L. Montiel-Chamorro, Virginia Commonwealth University (2018) evaluated the learners’ academic performance of four English skills: speaking, listening, reading, writing. The research also examined the final scores of students. Consequently, in spite of the dependence of time-investment problem in teaching methods, the findings showed that the outcomes of the four skills of online and face-to-face students were similar and the overall scores were the same too.

In sum, online learning is preferred the same as face-to-face learning. And the learners’ outcomes do not depend on any learning modes. Genders’ differences do not influence on the learners’ preference of both modes. However, each of online learning or face-to-face learning has its own advantages. For example, while face-to-face learning is more favorable to discussions, online learning is more flexible in terms of learning time and place. Promoting these benefits of both modes in language teaching and learning is the job of course developers and teachers. And because the English language proficiency has a particular effect on students’ online learning skills, instructional courses of online learning skills should be also introduced.

Methodology:-

The case study was carried out as the research aim is to figure out students’ votes for online learning or for face-to-face mode from six general English classes at Sai Gon University. The participants were 180 undergraduates whose ages 19-21 from Year 1 to Year 3. They completely experienced online classes during two months from the beginning of March to the end of April 2020 to due to the Covid-19 outbreak. Now they are attending face-to-face classes as normal.

The online classes were created by Moodle and Google Meet with the obligation of the Internet access. Lecturers updated learning materials, announcements and important information of the subject for students on Moodle. Each lecturer or student had their own Moodle account to use while all online interactions were conducted using Google Meet. Teachers and learners could interact in there by camera and microphone by which teacher could ask learners to switch them on or off. The timetable was kept the same as the face-to-face learning. The team leader of each faculty could also control teachers’ teaching process by accessing Moodle and Google Meet.

Data were analyzed using the qualitative method. To gather data, the authors delivered a survey with one open question for learners to write their answers down in free texts. The question was “Do you prefer to learn English in an online class or in a face-to-face classroom? Why?”

The responses from participants were manually classified into three groups: “online learning preference”, “face-to-face learning preference”. The procedure was as follows: 1) classifying groups of opinions, 2) counting the number of answers in each group, 3) gathering same reasons in each group, and 4) summarizing reasons.

Findings:

As a result, the number of students who chose face-to-face mode was the same as that of who preferred online learning. The explanations of face-to-face learning voters were authentic interactions, less distraction factors, better environment for communication skill practice and more various learning activities. Flexibility of learning place and time, comfort and accessible online materials and lecture notes were the reasons for the online learning voters. A few participants could not decide their favorite mode of learning since both had their own outstanding benefits.

As far as the advantages of face-to-face learning were concerned, this mode required learners to physically attend every session of a course. Half of the participants preferred this mode for its face-to-face interactions between the instructor and classmates. When they did not understand anything, they could explain their problems clearly and the teacher was immediately available to help them in the class. In face-to-face learning, they felt more comfortable to focus on the lesson and it really encouraged them to learn. Meeting people on the flesh helps learners to improve their communicative skills, especially listening and speaking. Their pronunciation could also be corrected right away in the class. Presenting their ideas in front of the class and naturally exchanging knowledge to each other might build up their confidence in using the language. In direct classes, students could make more friends and got more active in physical learning activities which facilitated their rapport. Some informants supported the ideas of fixed schedule and disciplines in the classroom, which also helped them to focus on learning.

However, there were some disadvantages of English learning face-to-face. Participants mentioned that they did not have enough time to practice their communicative skills due to the time limit for one class. Moreover, some students who had no enough self-confidence in their pronunciation found it uncomfortable to exchange their ideas in front of their classmates, especially in a foreign language.

The other half of voters for online learning explained the benefits of this mode. They were flexible learning hours, which meant they could learn whenever they wanted and spent as much time as they can. Alongside, thanks to modern technology, online learning mode allowed learners to learn wherever they wish to as long as there is a smart device connected to the Internet. They also suggested this mode of learning as a cost-saving one, in terms of transportation expense. This is the so-called convenience as they defined. In addition, a wide range of levels and variety of content-based materials were one of the main good points to be mentioned. The fact that the source of learning materials was always available and accessible assisted students to actively select their favorites, revise and broaden their knowledge at any time. Without bringing along thick text books, online materials provided students with e-books, web-links, videos, recordings, and lecture notes. For example, students were not worried about missing a class meeting because the teacher’s lectures were recorded and students were able to replay them as many times as possible. This also allowed them enough time to acquire the knowledge and revise it. Therefore, students found online learning relaxing and comfortable while the mood of teachers was ignored. There are other benefits mentioned by the participants. They supposed they could practice pronunciation, grammar, listening and learn vocabulary easily on many websites. Some shy students could be more initiative and confident in their learning while in traditional class they were not. Several of them expected a better care from teachers or instructors in online classes and the opportunity enhancement of interactions with other peers. A reason for their expectations is that they were afraid to be laughed by their peers whenever they asked the teacher stupid questions or when they had to present ideas in front of the whole class.

According to the above informants’ explanations, Internet-based English learning has such a lot of plus points, but there are some drawbacks to be considered. A group of students thought that online learning was not compulsory, which means it required them to study on a voluntary basis. Especially, students who lack of self-study skills or awareness may easily be discouraged. They were also concerned about the system of tracking or evaluation of their performance. The others found it uncomfortable to communicate or interact with instructors or their peers in the internet. It derived from the fact that they expected English to be used to communicate in the real world. According to the above findings, online learning is gradually attracting learners’ attention when there were more than a third of the participants showed their interest in this mode of learning.

Interestingly, a number of participants suggested the idea of combination of online learning and traditional learning. "Learning on computer too much isn't good. Learning English traditionally all the time is also out of date. Why not combine the two learning kinds so that we can receive the benefits of both because each type has both strong and weak points?". "I think learning on computer can help me both acquire English knowledge and skills and improve my computer skill. So I like it. Face-to-face learning is also good because I can listen to teacher presenting lessons directly and communicate with many friends, exchange the knowledge. Therefore, I like both types." "I like both. Learning on computer requires learners to work a lot and do many exercises to practice English. It can be used as a reference resource at home. Learning in traditional class can help me communicate, be instructed directly, more easily to acquire the lesson, improve speaking skill and take part in the class more actively."

Based on the above findings, we can come to discussions and conclusions.

Discussions:-

Face-to-face learning was preferred the same as online learning. The advantages of face-to-face learning were face-to-face interactions beside its disadvantages of limit of learning time in the classroom. The online learning, despite the requirement of discipline and interaction limit, was available in its flexibility and modernity. Therefore, we cannot deny any of the two learning modes. Some informants suggested a combination of both modes as blended learning to optimize students' learning and minimize learners' demotivation. If we can bring our learners into this hybrid mode, they will take full advantages from both. However, how to combine them effectively should be considered more in the future. The findings of this research will be a fundamental ground for our next research of how to adapt technology to stimulate effective communicative language teaching. All is for the purpose of learner-centered learning and teaching.

Conclusions:-

In conclusion, the benefits of traditional classroom learning such as the favor of face-to-face interaction with the teacher and classmates are comparable with those of convenience, flexibility and multi-sources and tasks which are assisted by online learning. Nevertheless, the survey demonstrated that online learning lacked of discipline or control, and cause learners' confusion from using technology. Whereas, due to time restriction in a classroom, students did not have enough time to do the drills or other learning tasks.

In addition, blended learning, a hybrid mode of e-learning and traditional learning, is worth to be researched in the next phase to promote the strengths and address the weaknesses from these both modes of learning.

References:-

1. Cakir R. & Solak E. (2014). Face to face or e-learning in Turkish EFL context. Turkish Online Journal of Distance Education. TOJDE July 2014 ISSN 1302-6488 Volume: 15 Number: 3 Article 4.
2. Kemp N. & Grieve R. (2014). Face-to-face or face-to-screen? undergraduates' opinions and test performance in classroom vs. online learning. Original Research Article.
3. Kuama S. & Intharaksa U. (2016). Is online learning suitable for all English language students. PASAA. Vol 52.
4. Montiel-Chamorro M. L. (2018). Comparing online English language learning and face-to-face English language learning at El Bosque University in Colombia. VCU Scholars Compass.
5. Nguyen Ngoc Vu. (2016). An investigation of Vietnamese students' learning styles in online language learning. Science Journals of University of Education.