

Research Article

Investigating Learner's Perceptions About the Improvement in Communication Skills Through Online Learning: A Case Study of QUEST, Nawabshah, Sindh, Pakistan.

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Abstract

Undoubtedly, it is fundamental truth and fact accepted by all the academicians, scholars, teachers, learners, and educators that communication skills play the very significant role in the lives of people to achieve their goals. However, the current century only stands on the pillar of technology which has revolutionized the educational systems across the globe and has changed the ways of teaching and learning process. By keeping such scenario and change in educational systems of the 21st century in account, the present study carried out on knowing the perceptions of Engineering students of QUEST, NAWABSHAH about learning of communication skills through online process and also highlighted the problems students face while taking online classes. Total no samples were 100, 27 were female students while 73 were male participants which were selected from three different engineering departments of QUEST, NAWABSHAH including 33 participants from Chemical, 33 participants from Telecommunication, and 34 participants from Energy & Environment Department by employing the simple random sampling technique.

Additionally, quantitative method was used to collect data from the respondents in which 20 close-ended questionnaires were asked by implying the five-point Likert scale. Researcher adapted 10 close-ended questionnaires for data collection from the survey of Sugito, Sir Mulyani, ES, Hartono, Superatono (2017) "Enhancing Students' Communication Skills through Problem Posing and Presentation," plus 10 questionnaires were created by researcher himself. Collected data was analyzed through SPSS version 26 in which descriptive statistics were drawn to show the result in form of frequency, percentage, accumulative percentage, and pie diagrams. After finishing with

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SPSS analysis, researcher interpreted the data separately of each item. Overall Results of the study concluded that the perception of learners towards online learning is positive. However, learners really face some serious problems in online learning, problems such as, connectivity problem, electricity problem, schedule problem, noise problems, hesitation problem, confidence problem, interaction problem, criticism problem, presentation problem, and so on and so forth. On the basis of findings of this research study, researcher suggests that more research studies on this area are needed in order to aware the learners about online learning and make them familiarize with global teaching and learning processes, especially in the context of Pakistani engineering universities.

Keywords: Online Learning, Communication Skills, Perceptions of the Learners, Problems of the Online Learning.

Introduction

Oral communication indicates verbal communication that takes place among the individuals for exchanging information and knowledge and gets things, aims, purposes done. Etymologically, the word communication has been taken from Latin word “Communis”, which means to share something, especially sharing ideas. Broadly speaking, communication is the channel/means/tools/process through which people share their ideas, feelings, thoughts, perceptions, emotions and so on. Experts, scholars, linguists, have given various definitions about defining communication so there is not a one definition to define communication. Specifically, communication is the way forward to exchange ideas, information, share knowledge that includes not only oral and written words, but also covers non-linguistics elements, non-verbal postures, personal characteristics, dialect, styles, physical environment, or anything that provides meaning to the interaction (Hybels and Weaver, 1998).

Furthermore, Comeaux (1996) characterized communication as an exchange between at least two individuals who are commonly occupied with the way toward making meaning. Ang (2004) describes communication as the process of transformation and transmission of information and messages by using verbal and non-verbal signs and symbols. The communication cycle happens through the trading of messages that can be oral and non-verbal (Brooks and Heath, 1993).

Broadly looking at communication, over 500 meanings of communication have been given by correspondence specialists. In the same way, there are different speculations to concentrate completely or to characterize the issues of verbal/oral communication skills (cf. Mortensen, C. David, 1972; Dobra, A., 2002). Although, oral communication is characterized as a shared interaction among speaker and audience (crowd) which includes the 13 gainful and responsive abilities (Byrne, 1986). Along these lines, the specialist takes note of that oral communication is specifically the oral association between at least two individuals. Oral relational abilities incorporate eye to eye relational communication, oral introductions, bunch communication, speaker-crowd communication, or phone communication, talks and courses, discourses, interviews, bunch conversations, gatherings, and arrangement abilities. The decision relies upon the need and motivation behind the communication.

Literature Review

Over the years, Scholars and experts are of the view that communication skills are firmly connected to professional development and efficacy. Russ (2009) proposed that faculty of institute must inculcate students with all the essential communication skills that are very required by employers.

Campbell (2001) opined that in order to have profound successful professional life, one must be adept at verbal or oral presentation skills. Grez, Valcke, and Roozen (2009) suggested that high education must rate these skills as vital component to measure competency. "With the exception of learners studying correspondence, most students take all things considered one course underscoring oral relational abilities; consequently, most non-discourse majors have almost no chance to refine and build up their interactive abilities" (Cronin & Glen, 1991).

Kennedy (2007) recommends the strategy to bridge this gap by making oral communication practices as a norm throughout assigned curriculum mean while students are adapting and getting field related content. Dundes (2001) stressed on oral communication as missing link in educational exercises. According to 2009 survey of 505 business communication trainers at 321 U.S colleges and universities, public speaking was declared as finest and suitable theme when it comes to the fulfilment of topics. Public speaking skill demands its due standard recognition since it has immensely been neglected.

Tanveer (2016), found in his study that the participants have different observations towards online learning that is extending from exceptionally certainty to hesitance of depending intensely on the utilization of modern innovative tools in classroom-based language learning and teaching. For the most part, learners are surer with a mouse or touchpad than a dry delete board, which shows that ICT is by and large progressively called upon to address the developing interest of learning through most recent media and innovative tools. Nonetheless, the difficulties like technological ignorance, very restricted instructive foundation of certain learners, absence of time and advanced assets, absence of certainty to utilize computerized gear, undeveloped speaker, and so forth go about as boundaries to make the maximum capacity of ICT stay undiscovered. to improve the viability of ICT learning condition, teachers and learners must be offered enough help regarding preparing, hardware and time assets.

Research Methodology

Participants and The Process of Sampling

The target population of this study was Engineering students of Quest Nawabshah 33 students of first year from Chemical department, 33 students of first year from Telecommunication department, 34 students of first year from Energy & Environment engineering department. The selected numbers of the participants are 100. The researcher used simple random sampling for the current study. Simple random sampling is the technique in which each participants of the study given equal chance to participate at the fullest level to share their experience b taking part in the research study."

Overview of the Research Design

The research design will be used for this study is quantitative. The data will be gathered in a descriptive form with respect to the scope and nature of the issue. Creswell (1994) takes quantitative approach to be a procedure of knowing problems of human being socially and culturally consist of constructing a complete picture and complex designed by gathering detailed information and data from the respondents in their natural surroundings so that phenomena or a problem could be understood well and solved.

Instrument

Investigating Learner's Perceptions About the Improvement in Communication Skills Through Online Learning: A Case Study of QUEST, Nawabshah, Sindh, Pakistan.

Researcher adapted 10 close-ended questionnaires for data collection from the survey of Sugito, Sir Mulyani, ES, Hartono, Superatono (2017) “Enhancing Students’ Communication Skills through Problem Posing and Presentation,” plus 10 questionnaires (Appendix B) were created by researcher himself.

Construction Of The Implied Questionnaire

Additionally, the design of the utilized questionnaire is portrayed as; the principal explanation was built on Investigating learner’s perceptions about the improvement of Communication Skills through Online Teaching and learning: A Case study of QUEST Nawabshah

Thus, the table given under is to comprehend the questionnaire formation that this researcher has continued in the investigation. The following table is giving an extensive portrayal of questions and their sources. The design of the sample study with assets has been introduced in Table No 01.

Structure of Questionnaire

Item No	Item
01	I believe that chatting online enhanced my students’ communication skills.
02	My students` talked to designate as the spoke person during an online presentation of English language.
03	My students practice for online presentation at home.
04	The course activities contribute to students understanding communication skills content.
05	I developed online learning communication skills activities which are well prepared and delivered.
06	I recommended helpful reading materials /texts for online communication skills.
07	My students practice presentation in front of me and their friends through online process.
08	Communication skills activities have a clear relationship to content of course designed for communication skills improvement.
09	The communication skills course assessment tasks are fair and appropriate.
10	Online learning communication skill helps my students to achieve the stated course learning outcomes.
11	Do you feel relax while teacher teaching communications skills through online?
12	Do you face internet issues while taking online classes?
13	Do teachers give you enough chance to deliver your ideas?
14	Do you find online learning an effective process?
15	Do you face timing issue of online classes?
16	Is there too much disturbance in the online classes?
17	Do Online classes underestimate your confidence level?
18	You face lots of criticism from your fellows in online classes while communicating your ideas?
19	Are online classes are just waste of time?

20	Do you find any improvement in your communication skills while taking online classes?
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Guiding Research Questions

- 1) What are the perceptions of students about the improvement of communication skills through online teaching and learning?
- 2) What are the problems students face while online learning the communication skills?

Data Analysis Procedure

The collected data of questionnaire were analyzed by using SPSS Software 26 version in which frequency distribution, descriptive statistics, descriptive ratio was done. In demographic data, the participants were asked about their age, gender, department, degree name, year of the study.

Data Analysis

Discussion about the Research Question 01

Perceptions of the Learners about improvement of Communication Skills through Online Learning

However, the collective responses from the respondents demonstrated that the learners really find online as the good channel and source which helps learners to improve and enhance their communication skills since communication skills play the significant role in the academic and professional lives of the students. Although, the respondents were from engineering departments and they have been taught English subjects as the compulsory courses, therefore, they need desperately need to improve their communicative competence in order to do their best in their academic and professionally careers. The respondents in one of their responses about chatting with peers showed strong agreement and demonstrated that via online learning classes they have much improved their chatting habit in terms of discussing, asking, answering, questioning, sharing their ideas with other class fellows and sometimes with their instructors. The learners comparatively think and perceive that they have managed to improve these areas which are belonging directly with their communicative competence such as, sensing online presentation, level of understanding things and contents, enjoying the course activities, comprehend the reading materials /texts , overcome hesitation, solving an assessment tasks, matching, learning, and achieving outcomes. The perceptions of respondents towards online learning has been evolved magically and substantially because of the improvements which they have observed and found in their communication skills. Some of the learners found online learning as the activity-based learning in which each and every member of the class is actively engaging and participating fully.

Moreover, the learners were fully aware about the course material which is made in a such way that helped learners to produce and understand their level of communication skills through interactive sessions in online classes. The learners showed relatively 80% agreement towards course material and more importantly, the material is prepared and delivered with lot of ease by the instructors to the learners. Overall, the result of first research question indicates that the learners perceptions towards online learning has been positively developed and their communication skills have much upgraded and boosted in online learning process.

Discussion about the Research Question 02

Problems Students Face While Learning Communication Skills Through Online Learning process

However, there are lots of problems students face when they come to learn through online process and those problems are genuine in nature which hinder badly the learning cycle of students, especially, the engineering students face trouble to enhance their communication skills through online process. When the learners were asked about what the frequent problems are and challenges they encounter most in their online classes then they responded substantially. Some of the most inevitable and frequent are listed here which were collected and extracted from the respondents through data collection process and data analysis process such as, respondents feel relax while teacher teaching though online. There are lot number of learners who face connectivity issue in figures 75% respondents faced this problem out of hundred and only 25% respondents did not fact it. Behavior of teacher in online classes must be positive, polite, soft, cooperative, courageous, motivator to lift students learning but when learners were asked about teacher behavior then 60% said behavior of teachers in online class is satisfactory but rest of other 40% respondents showed reservations towards behavior of teachers in online classes. Interestingly, majority of the respondents found online learning an effective process and 70% participants agree while just 30% participants showed disagreement. , schedule and set timetable for online is significant and necessary and majority of respondents discovered timing issue of online classes and 75% respondents are facing this issue. There is too much disturbance in the online classes and 80% participants demonstrated it as the genuine problem they face in online classes. Confidence level issue of learners in online classes reflected the 50/50 answers. Learners also presented and reflected the problem of face lots of criticism from your fellows in online classes and relatively 65% showed and aid that they face criticism from their peers in online classes. Amazingly, online classes just waste of time and learners remained 50/50 in their responses. The good and positive point is this that the learners thought and found improvement in their communication skills. Comparatively, the result displays that there are number of problems students face while taking online classes and because of that the students find it hard to improve and excel in their communicative competencies.

Conclusion

After a long journey and hardships, finally, the study has touched the final pages of conclusion. In the end, this can be said and summed up that there are some lot of genuine problems available in our online learning system since the communication skills work as the spinal cord in the learners life, especially engineering students which are needed to be urgently noticed and solved so that the learners and teachers must continue their work in the crisis of COVID-19. Overall results of the study showed some grim aspects, whereas some positive perceptions were also observed from the respondents as for as teaching of communication skills are concerned via online. The collective picture of study demonstrated that perceptions of the participants towards online learning is positive except few problems which learners face during online learning process.

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