

## IMPACT ON THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNING DURING COVID 19 PANDEMIC – A CASE STUDY

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### Abstract

The COVID-19 pandemic brought a huge disruption in the education system across the world. Due to interruption in the education system 1.5 billion learners across the world were affected. The socio-economic and mental well-being of the students were forced to grapple with the fallout in the education system. College closures exacerbated the issues among the students due to the inequity in access to digital platforms. The majority of the students reported the stress feeling due to the lockdown since March 2020. This study aims at the impact of online learning of the English Language in Manonmaniam Sundaranar University College students in Tirunelveli District. The research design that has been adopted for the study is the quantitative method. A structured questionnaire was used for data collection from students. This questionnaire was sent to 143 students and 93 responded. The respondents were the students of the first year and second year of select college who have English as the Second Language in their curriculum. The findings of this study assert that online learning despite being convenient has been a stressful journey for the majority of the participants in learning the English Language and has been moderately successful during the Covid-19 outbreak. The significant outcome of this study is online learning has been the better alternative for the teaching and far-reaching solution in this global pandemic but has not been the best alternative as it did not fulfill the expectations of students.

**Key Words:** ELT (English Language Teaching), EFL(English as a Foreign Language), ICT(Information and Communication Tools), VLT- (Virtual Learning Tools).

### VIRTUAL LEARNING EFFECT

It is important to note there is no robust structural curriculum available for Virtual Learning Method. But in the past one-year pandemic has pushed to redesign the curriculum incorporating the VLE it may or may not align with the existing traditional pattern of the educational system. The implications may not be easily visible now but in the future, it will be unavoidable in the education system.

### RESEARCH METHODOLOGY:

The primary data were collected through questionnaires. The participants of the study were the 1<sup>st</sup> year and the 2<sup>nd</sup> students of Manonmaniam Sundaranar University College who have English as a Second Language in their curriculum. They study the English language in the first year and second year. The respondents were both male and female with similar age

group, different localities and at different levels of learning at the university. Out of 143 students, 93 sent in responses

The study employed Random Sampling Technique. A questionnaire was prepared using google forms with three types of questions,

1. Multiple-choice Questions,
2. Open-Ended Questions
3. Online Poll

The data that had been collected were analyzed using the Random Sampling Technique. Google forms were used as a tool to collect responses from the participants. Though it is an online tool it is very effective to extract the results as it was quick and easy to interpret the data.

At the end of March 2020 colleges were in the schedule of conducting semester examinations. After the unprecedented continuous lockdown across the world, none of the educational institutions were able to conduct face to face classes. So we conducted this survey in November 2020 and in March 2021. At the first stage, we collected the demographic data and tested their English proficiency skills. The survey was designed to collect the data of the challenges they faced during online classes, accessibility to digital devices, flexibility in learning, Assessment of online examination, teacher's ability to handle virtual classroom environment.

Within the survey, respondents were asked to evaluate the following parameters on a ten-point scale. The parameters that were followed was:

- (1) Academic performance;
- (2) Concentration;
- (3) Memory;
- (4) Progress in performing oral assignments;
- (5) Progress in performing written assignments;
- (6) Ability to understand the information while reading and by listening;
- (7) General health condition during the training;
- 8) Mental condition during the training
- 9) Ability to converse with fellow students
- 10)English Newspaper Reading

### **GAIN AND LOSS**

Colleges were shut down from the second week of March as and this has also pushed educators to reshape the mechanism of imparting lessons. Some immediate measures included shifting the teaching process online on an untested and unprecedented scale, conducting online assessments on a trial-and-error basis, and creating content suitable for remote learning using technology and tools among others. However, transitioning from classroom teaching to an 'online mode' has been challenging as there was limited access to the Internet, due to the lack of uninterrupted power supply, technical illiteracy for the teachers, absence of a prospective monitoring method, hindrances to replicating the rapport between teacher and students in an online mode of teaching and learning, also due to the increase in screen-time and the non-availability of the tools to create content in regional languages.

What they gained

- Virtual classes were quick

- Exposure to the Zoom and Google Meet app and technology
- Convenient place to learn
- Ensures passive learning
- Preparation of assignments and Tests were made easy
- Retrieval of recorded classes

What they lost

- College environment
- Teacher-Student Interaction
- Classroom environment
- Reduced question-answer session
- Continuous assessment

Due to these significant shortcomings, the closure of the educational institutions, and the absence of the face to face teaching, the learning outcomes of the students are producing a negative impact (Lindzon, 2020). The majority of the students do not continue their learning activities beyond the online classes as they require a classroom environment; only a few students do that.

### **EMOTIONAL IMPACTS**

During lockdown, students were reeling under pressure because of uncertainty over their future.

- Emotional discomfort
- Anguish
- Depression

The lack of social elements is the main reason for the emotional impact among the students. It has created two sets of students “have” and “have not”. Students shows a high level of psychological anxiety as English is the key to securing job employment opportunities. Another factor is fear of academic loss due to the successive lockdowns imposed though many relaxations were given in-between colleges were advised to shut down.

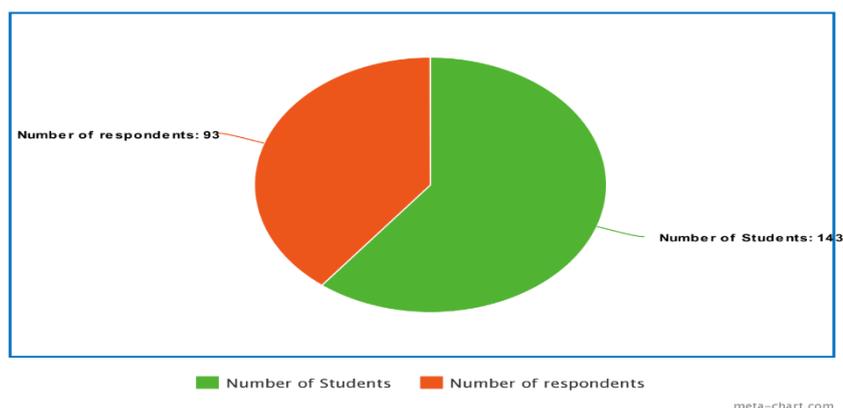
Poor motivation by the instructors and high expectations of the students created a huge gap in this pandemic period. Also, the non-availability of the universal guidelines for e-learning made it difficult. Regular classes are not now unpredictable as the dependency is based on technology. Any interruption or social barrier may cause an emotional impact on the students. Social barriers such as the majority of the students are forced now to spend the money for internet data and high-end mobiles to attend the online classes.

### **SCOPE OF THE STUDY:**

The English language has been the primary factor for the elite people in India. Ever since globalization spread its waves across the nations the social barriers were slowly getting eliminated due to the importance of English language learning. Jobs require intrinsically good English for the students. The functionality and fluency of English is widely accepted and expected by recruiters everywhere across the world. Major technological and scientific advancements happen only through the English language. The invisible obsession with the English language is visible across India as it has deep roots in the minds of every Indian. Because of the communicative and educative value, this study has a huge scope to extend further research based on the data available.

The shift from the conventional learning method to virtual learning affected both the learners and teachers. Significantly the quality of the education in the Manonmaniam Sundaranar University affiliated colleges that adopted the virtual learning method could contribute more to identify the possible methods that reduce the negative factors that exist in the current model of online learning and teaching. These findings will help in accelerating the suitable factors to motivate the students to learn English as a foreign language (EFL)

### DATA INTERPRETATION



In the questionnaire following questions were asked to respond and the responses were noted

1. How effective were the English Classes through online teaching?
2. How many classes per week?
3. What are all the technical problems faced during online classes?
4. Do you have high-speed connectivity?
5. Which device you are using? Laptop/Mobile/Tablet
6. Were you able to follow the English classes regularly?
7. Is the classroom environment better than the virtual learning environment?
8. How stressful you were during online classes?
9. How important is face-to-face communication in teaching?
10. Did online learning of English make you comfortable?

The first questionnaire had 10 general questions based on the general queries. The survey results showed that many agreed that online teaching is the best and most effective to the pandemic situation. Students had 3 English classes per week in average. The major technological problem faced by them was poor internet connectivity which disrupted their classes. They were not able to follow the classes and take notes. The majority of them had 4G networks in their mobile. 88 % had mobile device to attend the class and 9 % had laptop to attend and 3 % had tablet. Many of them responded that they were able to follow the classes regularly and agreed that virtual learning environment.

Stressful during pandemic times is the major factor to demotivate the students and face to face communication is essential to motivate them. Majority of them agreed that they felt very comfortable attending the online classes. In the second set of the questionnaire, the researcher surveyed particularly the learning and teaching methodology.

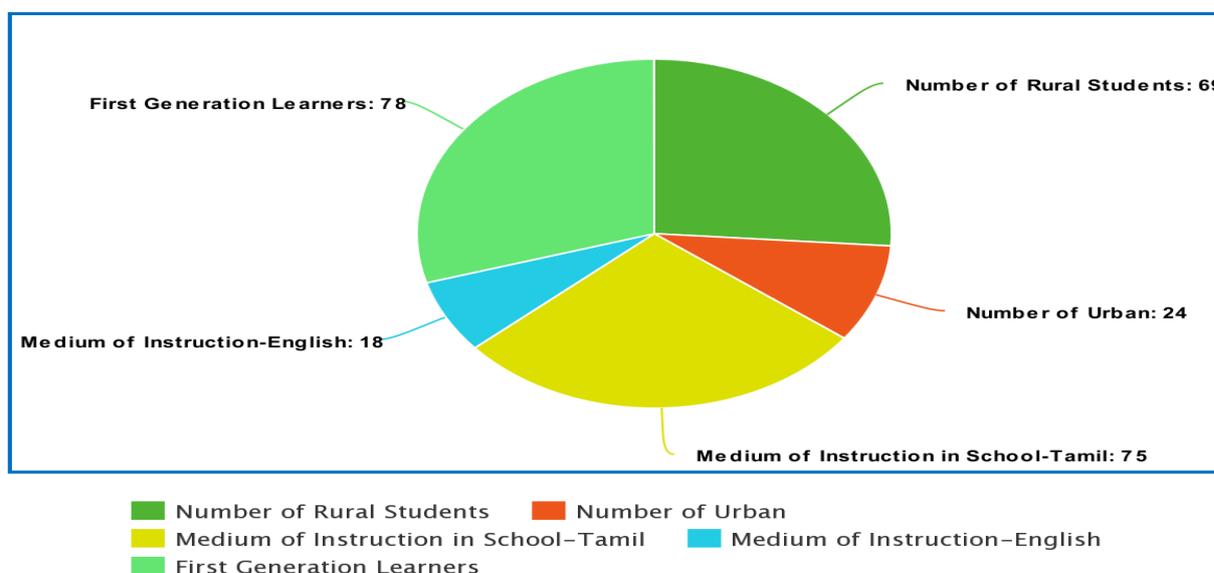
1. Do you think that learning English online is easy and effective?
2. Do you think more activities are needed to learn during online classes?
3. Do you think distraction is the main barrier in online classes?
4. Do you think Zoom is better than Google Meet?
5. Do you think an organized class is needed?

Table 1.

QUESTION NO	AGREE	SOMEWHAT AGREE	DISAGREE	SOSMEWHAT DISAGREE
1.	67 % (61)	13 % (12)	12 % (11)	8 % (7)
2	79 % (72)	7 % (6)	5 % (4)	9 % (8)
3	88 % (81)	2 % (1)	7 % (6)	3 % (3)
4	75 % (69)	5 % (4)	6 % (5)	14 % (12)
5	92 % (84)	2 % (2)	4% (4)	4% (4)

Based on the results almost 80 % agreed that English learning online is best effective. 20 % disagreed to that because of the difficulties they faced during online classes. 86% of the students agreed to have more activities such as assignments. Many of the respondents agreed that distraction is a barrier to focusing the English class. The main distraction is the home environment. Many of the respondents agreed that Zoom is the best app for Google meet because of its features such as the free option to download, encrypted calls. Though video and audio quality is better in Google meet, Zoom is a far better for teaching option. Around 94 % of Organized class is needed because of it visual quality. Online learning needs a specific organized structure as it is technology-based learning. Students need a quiet place to study or attend classes. Creating an effective space for learning needs an organized space for its success. Establishing a routine time to attend the class or follow the class needs dedicated schedule.

#### PIE CHART REPRESENTING DEMGRAPHIC PROFILE



meta-chart.com

In our survey we found that 78 % are from First Generation. 69 % are from rural background and 24 % are from Urban background. 18 % opted English medium in school studies and 75 % students are from Tamil Medium background.

Bar Chart Representation of the participants about online

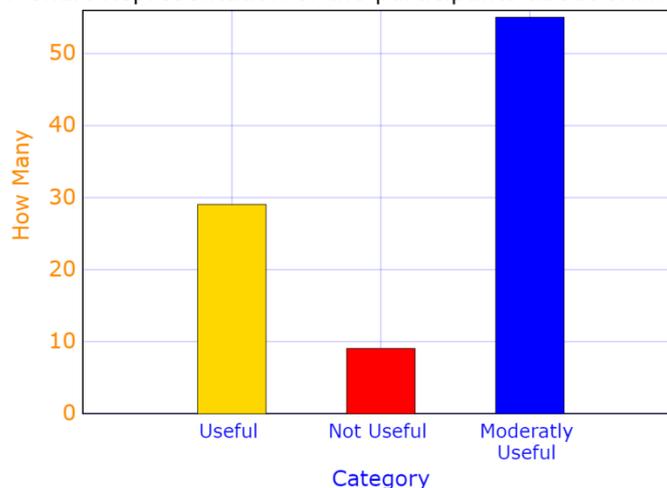


TABLE REPRESENTING OVERALL SURVEY OF ONLINE LEARNING

### **Limitations of the Research**

The limitations of the study is sample data collected from only Manonmaniam Sundaranar University College and not the affiliated colleges of the MS University therefore the generalization of the results of the student's perception is limited. Totally eighteen colleges are affiliated to Manonmaniam Sundaranar University in Tirunelveli District. Many of the college students hail from the suburban areas of Tirunelveli. Most of them are from a rural background and had their school education through Vernacular Medium(Tamil). Approximately 15,000 students are pursuing UG courses in the colleges. Out of 15,000, around 10,000 students have English as Second Language in their curriculum. They study the English language in the first year and second year. Hence there is a scope for further research in this particular area of study.

### **Conclusion**

Online learning has helped the students become more independent as learners and has helped them pursue highly individualized learning programs. The major demographical issue the learners faced is most of them are from rural backgrounds i.e 69% and the remaining 24% are from urban backgrounds. The overwhelming consensus among the students is the difficulty to practice English in the home environment, offline resources such as books were not much used and alternative digital tools such as Google, Youtube, provided a wide range of access to e-books e-learning materials.

The major impediments to English language learning during the COVID-19 pandemic time were connecting to digital devices with a sufficient amount of seamless connectivity, parents' capacity to support online learning, and the teacher-student gap. The findings of this study assert that online learning despite being convenient has been a stressful journey for the

majority of the participants in learning the English Language and has been moderately successful during the Covid-19 outbreak. The significant outcome of this study is online teaching has been the better alternative for the teaching and far-reaching solution to this global pandemic but has not been the best alternative as it did not fulfill the expectations of the teachers and the students.

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