Chapter 4
Educator–Student Partnership:
Utilizing Moodle to Investigate How Learner Autonomy Is Expressed

Judith Nesamalar Tharumaraj
Taylor's University, Malaysia

Kalai Vaani Rajandram
Taylor's University, Malaysia

Nallammai Singaram
Taylor's University, Malaysia

ABSTRACT

The incorporation of web-based instruction within the educator-student partnership in the English language classroom today has taken on a pivotal role in complementing if not supplementing the traditional face-to-face teaching mode. In this study, the researchers set out to find out how pre-university students from various majors in Taylor's University, perceive Moodle as an online English Language learning environment that is able to capture some of the facets of learner autonomy amidst face-to-face interaction with the educator. It evaluates whether these students recognize the effectiveness of Moodle as a tool that develops autonomous learning in the process of engaging with various online language activities prepared by the educator. An online survey was administered to capture their attitude and personal feedback on learning language through various Moodle features utilized throughout the semester. Findings of the research indicated that the students acknowledge Moodle as a language learning platform that enables autonomous learning to be practiced in a supportive environment.

INTRODUCTION

Partnership between educator and student in the process of teaching and learning is both vital and imperative in how knowledge is developed, gained, and passed down. The idea of this partnership is not new (Agnoletto & Queiroz, 2019). However, fostering this relationship to build an autonomous student,

who seeks knowledge, is constantly being researched, more so since educator - student partnership is continuously evolving with time. For any educational partnership goals to succeed, factors such as time, communication, flexibility, expectations, teaching methodologies and practices, etc. would need to be considered. Being in a technological society, tools used to build a supportive virtual learning environment would also matter in the educator-student teaching and learning partnership. To be specific to this study, it would be a virtual learning platform, which is Moodle, that enables both the educator and the student to test boundaries where autonomous learning is concerned.

Achieving module learning outcomes have become the key aim in institutions of higher learning. This is alongside their drive to adapt, adopt and adjust to the use of various modes of information technology. This move is not only to constructively carry out their intended instructional materials but to also accomplish what the module embarked to pursue in the first place. Being so, classrooms are more structured in a fashion that all elements, from the educator, all the way to its learning space, is navigated and aligned. Hence, it is commonplace that the present classroom environment is built around the instructor utilizing Course Management Software (CMS), such as Blackboard and Moodle. Instructors are supported in their use of podcasts, online discussion groups and other technologies to engage, interact, communicate and connect with students. This blend between traditional face-to-face format and technology-based learning is said to work hand-in-hand with the learning experience. It is believed to foster an increased understanding and better student learning (Dillon & Gabbard, 1998). However, Ng and Jung (2018, citing Roche, 2014) and Sivanandan et al. (2014) assert that as instructors, determining the correct technologies to use and how to use these new technologies in the appropriate capacity is where the challenge lies for most educators today.

There is an understanding that blended learning through virtual learning environments are the norm today especially in this current COVID-19 pandemic situation. Virtual spaces have grown in such a fashion that it is able to meet the multifarious needs and wants of the millennials that handle technology with ease. The integration of web-based support in the English language classroom today has taken on a pertinent role in complementing if not, supplementing the orthodox face-to-face teaching mode. The trend in blended learning via online platforms directs teaching and learning towards one that allows students to regulate their progress indirectly and implicitly instead of the educator explicitly supervising the outcome and objectives of a lesson. The concept which blended learning intends to put forward via these computer- generated environments works on the systematic foundation that what students learn virtually will not only support, but also sustain what they learn face-to-face in class (Rovai & Jordan, 2004; Thorne, 2003).

As a strategy that is no longer a fad, but instead a 'trend' that is here to stay, many EFL/ESL experts, policymakers, practitioners, and institutions today continue to question the effectiveness of learning the English language this way. In fact, Osguthorpe and Graham (2003) suggest that it is pivotal for educators to find the correct dynamics between online access to knowledge and information, and face-to face teacher-student engagement. We have recently seen how educators were in a dilemma when the pandemic struck globally across nations (Egbert, 2020). This widespread disease somewhat forced educators and students to tip the balance. The predicament was such that we naturally gravitated towards a full online mode. Consequences were inevitable; the learning curve being one of them. While it is still not a mode of choice in courses that are directed at enhancing language skills and competencies, blended learning has certainly made an impression and spurred some interesting conversations.

While there is a need to follow trends sometimes, educators are challenged with aligning blended learning activities to student learning outcomes. This again, must match assessments and evaluation criteria.

Related Content

Degree Attainment in Online Learning Programs: A Study Using National Longitudinal Data
Heather Carter, Credence Baker, Kim Rynearsonand Juanita M. Reyes (2020). *International Journal of Innovative Teaching and Learning in Higher Education (pp. 19-43).*
www.irma-international.org/article/degree-attainment-in-online-learning-programs/265505

Smartphone-Based Virtual Reality as an Immersive Tool for Teaching Marketing Concepts
Haithem Zourrig (2021). *International Journal of Innovative Teaching and Learning in Higher Education (pp. 1-13).*
www.irma-international.org/article/smartphone-based-virtual-reality-as-an-immersive-tool-for-teaching-marketing-concepts/273628

Developing Statistics Cognitions
 (2017). *Assessing and Measuring Statistics Cognition in Higher Education Online Environments: Emerging Research and Opportunities (pp. 57-95).*
www.irma-international.org/chapter/developing-statistics-cognitions/182188

Retention, Retention, Retention: Exploring Retention Solutions at a Private London University
Kate Armstrong (2018). *Critical Assessment and Strategies for Increased Student Retention (pp. 195-209).*
www.irma-international.org/chapter/retention-retention-retention/191944

The Impact of Industry Expert Adjuncts on Students' Course Experiences
D. Matthew Boyerand Erica B. Walker (2020). *International Journal of Innovative Teaching and Learning in Higher Education (pp. 16-28).*
www.irma-international.org/article/the-impact-of-industry-expert-adjuncts-on-students-course-experiences/260946