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EXPLORING THE IMPACT OF ONLINE LANGUAGE PLATFORMS ON TEACHING GRAMMAR SKILLS AMONG B2 LEVEL ESL LEARNERS

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Abstract

The study investigates the effectiveness of online language exchange platforms in enhancing grammar skills among B2-level students. The relevance of this research lies in the growing popularity of online language exchange platforms and technology in general that provides authentic practice and interactive environments in the classroom. Implementation of online platforms instead of traditional methods allows to attract students' attention to the lesson and increase motivation. Incorporating evidence from conducted experiments, questionnaires, and interviews this study demonstrates that online exchange platforms improve students' participation and comprehension in teaching grammar skills. It argues for the convenience and accessibility of online platforms. The study revealed the possibility of creating group learning tasks, such as composing dialogues, quizzes, presentations and other joint tasks. In general, the influence of modern online resources on the development of students' general language skills, in particular grammar, was confirmed, as well as the opportunity to immerse themselves in the current technological era.

Key words: interactive learning, authenticity, concentration, digital tools, distance learning, electronic portfolios, web-based access, software.



INTRODUCTION

After experiencing a major disruption in education due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the use of technology in learning has undergone a significant transformation. This experience has left its mark, and over the past few years, the use of technology in the learning process has increased significantly. Li (2021) in his work claimed the following: “An online learning platform is a web-based access and a software system that provides comprehensive services for distance teaching and learning through two-way multimedia communication networks”. Moreover, digital platforms are not solely confined to remote education but are also integrated into traditional classrooms to foster interactive learning experiences.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The integration of online language platforms has revolutionized the landscape of language teaching and learning. These platforms offer a dynamic and interactive approach to language acquisition, allowing learners to engage with diverse resources and multimedia materials (Amin & Paiman, 2022). Through virtual classrooms and interactive exercises, students can practice language skills in real-life scenarios, fostering a more immersive learning experience. The flexibility of online language platforms enables learners to tailor their study schedules to individual preferences, accommodating various learning styles (Lai et al., 2014). Additionally, these platforms often incorporate features such as instant feedback and assessment tools, facilitating personalized learning journeys. In the digital era, the importance of online platforms will only increase. Online platforms already have capabilities that far exceed formal education. This means that the influence of content distributed online will play an increasingly significant role in socialization, acquisition of competencies, and education throughout life.

The first online platforms for language learning emerged in the early 1990s, with the advent of the World Wide Web (Joksimovic, Kovanovic and Gasevic; 2015). These early platforms were primarily text-based and offered a limited range of features, such as vocabulary lists, grammar explanations, and interactive exercises. However, they



quickly gained popularity as they provided a convenient and affordable way for people to learn languages at their own pace. It is important to note that online platforms gained great popularity during the spread of the Covid-19 (2020). The whole world was isolated and teachers tried to maintain the quality of teaching using online tools.

The online teaching platform is a major application of information-based education (Zhang, 2019). The online platform for teaching foreign languages is designed with the aim of offering a more engaging educational experience for both teachers and students. This design addresses the limitations found in traditional platforms, such as insufficient classroom resources and restricted teaching hours. It enables students to preview content before classes, review materials after sessions, and stimulate their interest in learning through a wealth of teaching resources.

Consequently, despite the online learning evolution, learning online possibly will not be appropriate for each learner (Bouhnik & Carmi, 2013). However, despite the rapid growth of online learning applications in the academic sphere, insufficient attention has been given to understanding learners' prior backgrounds and experiences with online education. The students' background in relation to online learning plays a vital role in this context. This study also mentions such implementation challenges as a lack of qualified instructors, inadequate infrastructure and facilities, as well as students' readiness and resistance to embracing online learning platforms and Learning Management System (LMS) tools as educational resources.

Osipov et al. (2014) in their study claimed that despite all grammar knowledge in college, students are lacking real-life interactions with native speakers to increase their spoken language skills. Finding native speakers is a rather difficult task that requires a lot of time and resources. In this case, online platforms provide students and teachers with the opportunity to communicate over long distances. Chat rooms, forums, and conversation partner search encourage practice and exchange of experience, while feedback and game elements stimulate motivation and develop oral communication skills. Osipov, Nikulchev, et al. (2015) in further studies also emphasize that verbal



means of communication are formed by all kinds of speech activity, which can be developed and applied during foreign language learning.

Digital platforms are not solely confined to remote education but are also integrated into traditional classrooms to foster interactive learning experiences. Modern individuals, immersed in a technology-centric world, students are often regarded as digital natives (Partnership for 21st Century Learning, 2009). Consequently, they are anticipated to possess competencies in information, media, and technology. These include abilities such as accessing and critically assessing information, proficiently utilizing and organizing data, and interpreting media content. Educators should cultivate an inclusive classroom environment conducive to 21st-century teaching and learning methods (Cakrawati, 2017). Since the 21st century involves the engagement of students in collaborative work, teachers should integrate technologies with content and pedagogy.

Currently, online educational platforms have swiftly emerged and evolved, prompted by opportune circumstances (Shen & Jian-Li, 2022). The various online education platforms represented by MOOC (Massive Open Online Courses) have gained significant popularity among scholars and students. Nevertheless, for an effective teaching process, it is important to be able to choose the appropriate platform. Daniela and Rūdolf (2018) claimed that, while evaluating online learning platforms, it is crucial to consider the structure, course content, community support, and pricing to find the best fit, whether learning or teaching. The structure of a platform influences the learning experience, while diverse course content ensures comprehensive learning opportunities. It's essential to balance these factors to optimize learning or teaching experience.

While the application of game mechanics in online educational settings is still a relatively unexplored territory, there is a rising interest in leveraging online platforms as tools for gamification to tackle the issue of limited learner engagement (Hansch et al., 2015). Additionally, online gamification is being considered as a means to address technical constraints by encouraging early assignment submissions, thus alleviating



peak loads around deadlines. Furthermore, it can be utilized to incentivize students with access to exclusive content, such as virtual learning environments with bandwidth limitations, or the ability to exchange virtual points for credits in a corporate online store. This multifaceted approach aims to enhance participation and motivation within online learning environments while addressing practical challenges. Gamification elements should enhance the overall user experience, guiding users through content in a cohesive, intuitive, and captivating manner. Interviewees emphasized the importance of ensuring smooth navigation while minimizing distractions in gamified platforms.

In conclusion, the significance of language, particularly English, in today's globalized world cannot be overstated. The integration of online language platforms has undoubtedly changed the way languages are taught and learned, opening up many opportunities and challenges. These platforms provide students with a dynamic, interactive, and flexible experience, at the same time allowing them to use a variety of resources.

RESEARCH METHOD

The main goal of this research is to investigate and analyze the impact of online language exchange platforms and language learning apps on ESL students' proficiency in Uzbekistan, aiming to identify the effectiveness of these digital tools in enhancing language skills, specifically grammar.

Research questions:

1. What are the perceived benefits and challenges of using online language platforms for teaching grammar skills among B2 level ESL learners?
2. How do online language platforms compare to traditional classroom instruction in facilitating grammar skill development among B2 level ESL learners?
3. What specific features or aspects of online language platforms contribute most effectively to the improvement of grammar skills among B2 level ESL learners?
4. To what extent do learners actively engage with online language platforms outside of formal instruction, and how does this independent usage impact their grammar proficiency?



5. What are the attitudes and perceptions of ESL teachers towards integrating online language platforms into their teaching of grammar skills to B2-level learners?

Hypothesis:

Participation in online language exchange platforms and regular usage of language learning apps positively impact ESL students' grammar compared to traditional classroom instruction, as the interactive and personalized nature of these digital tools facilitates more engaging and tailored language learning experiences.

Objectives:

- To evaluate the usage patterns and frequency of online language exchange platforms and language learning apps among ESL students.
- To assess the perceived effectiveness of online language exchange platforms and language learning apps in improving various language skills, particularly grammar, among ESL students.
- To investigate the factors influencing ESL students' selection and usage of specific online language exchange platforms and language learning apps.
- To identify best practices and recommendations for optimizing the use of online language exchange platforms and language learning apps to enhance ESL students' language learning outcomes.
- To analyze the impact of online language exchange platforms and language learning apps on ESL students' overall language proficiency levels compared to traditional language learning methods.

Subject:

The experiment was conducted in an EFL class among 20 students with a B2 level of English proficiency.

Methods:

The study used a mixed-method design to collect data on the impact of online language exchange platforms and language learning apps on the English grammar proficiency of B2-level students.



At the beginning of the study, to obtain quantitative data, a questionnaire was developed and distributed to participants. This closed-ended questionnaire aimed to gather quantitative insights into their utilization of specific online platforms and applications, to determine their frequency, and to identify the most preferred types among them.

The study collected qualitative data through classroom observations aimed at assessing the integration of online platforms in ESL classrooms. These observations focused on examining students' participation in interactive group activities and their involvement in the lesson proceedings. In addition to classroom observations, the research employed semi-structured interviews with teachers to gain insights into their perspectives on the effectiveness of the online platforms.

Materials:

In this qualification paper, the data was collected by conducting questionnaires and interviews among students and teachers in inclusive classes.

RESULTS& DISCUSSIONS

This study aimed to investigate the impact of online language exchange platforms on the proficiency of ESL students. To achieve this, a two-week experiment was conducted with a group of 10 students at the B2 level. The methods employed in this experiment were designed to comprehensively explore the students' engagement with online language platforms and their resulting proficiency gains.

Over two weeks, participants in the experimental group demonstrated a notable increase in their language proficiency levels compared to those in the control group. This observation suggests that active participation in online language exchange platforms indeed contributes positively to the enhancement of ESL students' language skills.

Throughout the experiment, both qualitative and quantitative data collection methods were employed. Pre- and post-assessments were conducted to measure participants' language proficiency levels before and after the intervention, providing valuable insights into any observed changes.



Overall, the level of language proficiency and general fluency of students in English classrooms have been significantly improved.

A scale for assessment	
Section 1	7 points
Section 2	3 points
Section 3	5 points
Total:	15 points

Pre-test:

Control group		
<i>Nº</i>	<i>Name:</i>	<i>Points:</i>
1	Student- Mokhinur	13
2	Student- Navruza	13
3	Student- Dilbaroy	12
4	Student- Shorofat	10
5	Student- Shohmalik	6
<i>Total points:</i>		54

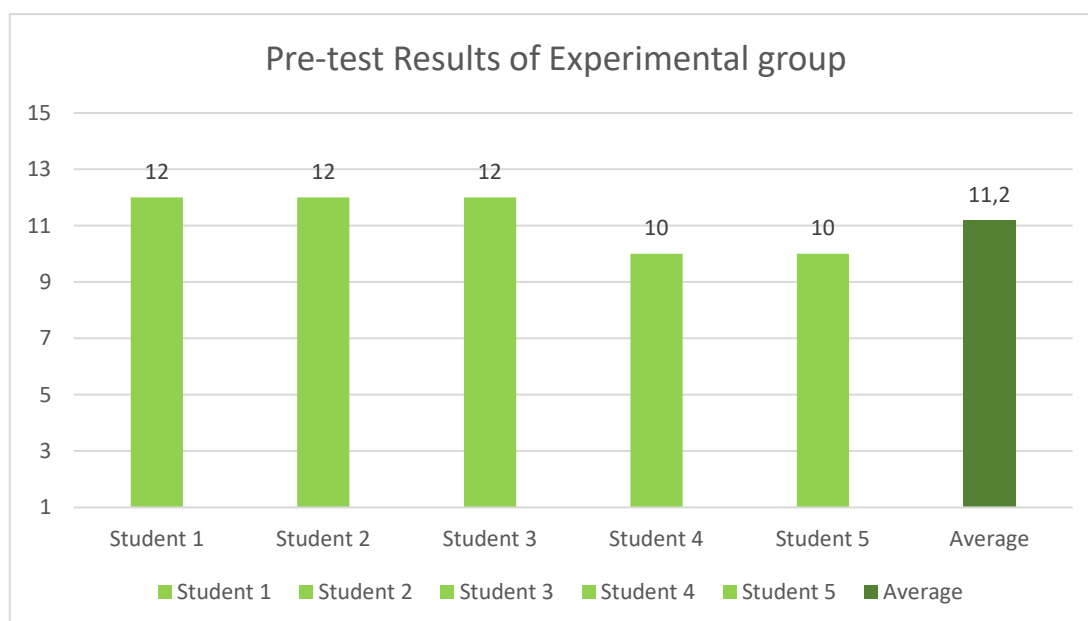
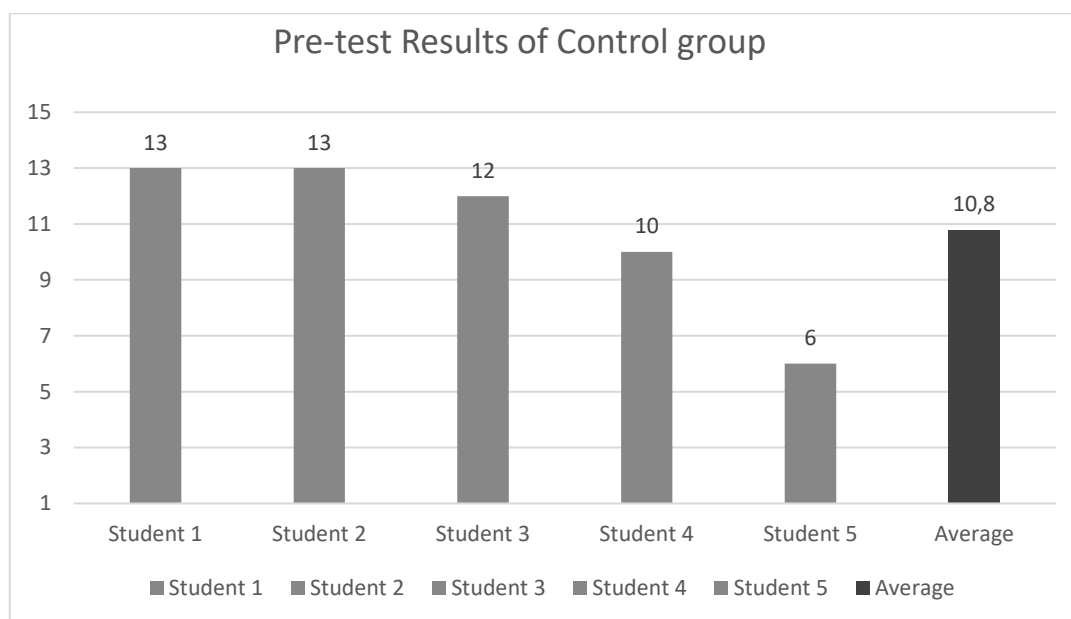
Statistics of Control group:

1. Mean: 10,8
2. Mode: 13- unimodal
3. Median: 12

Statistics of Experimental group:

1. Mean: 11,2
2. Mode: 12- unimodal
3. Median: 12

Experimental group		
<i>Nº</i>	<i>Name:</i>	<i>Points:</i>
1	Student- Mushtariy	12
2	Student- Evelina	12
3	Student- Camilla	12
4	Student- Jaloloddin	10
5	Student- Nurgul	10
<i>Total points:</i>		56



The pre-test was conducted with two groups of 5 students, with the experimental group demonstrating superior performance. This test was administered in the form of printed handouts, where students had to complete three grammar tasks through reading and analyzing text. In the control group, 40% of students achieved the highest score, obtaining 13 out of 15 correct. Conversely, in the experimental group, 60% of students scored 12 out of 15 correct. Consequently, the experimental group outperformed, with an average score of 11,2.

Post-test:



Control group		
<i>Nº</i>	<i>Name:</i>	<i>Points:</i>
1	Student- Mokhinur	12
2	Student- Navruza	12
3	Student- Dilbaroy	11
4	Student- Shohmalik	10
5	Student- Shorofat	10
<i>Total points:</i>		55

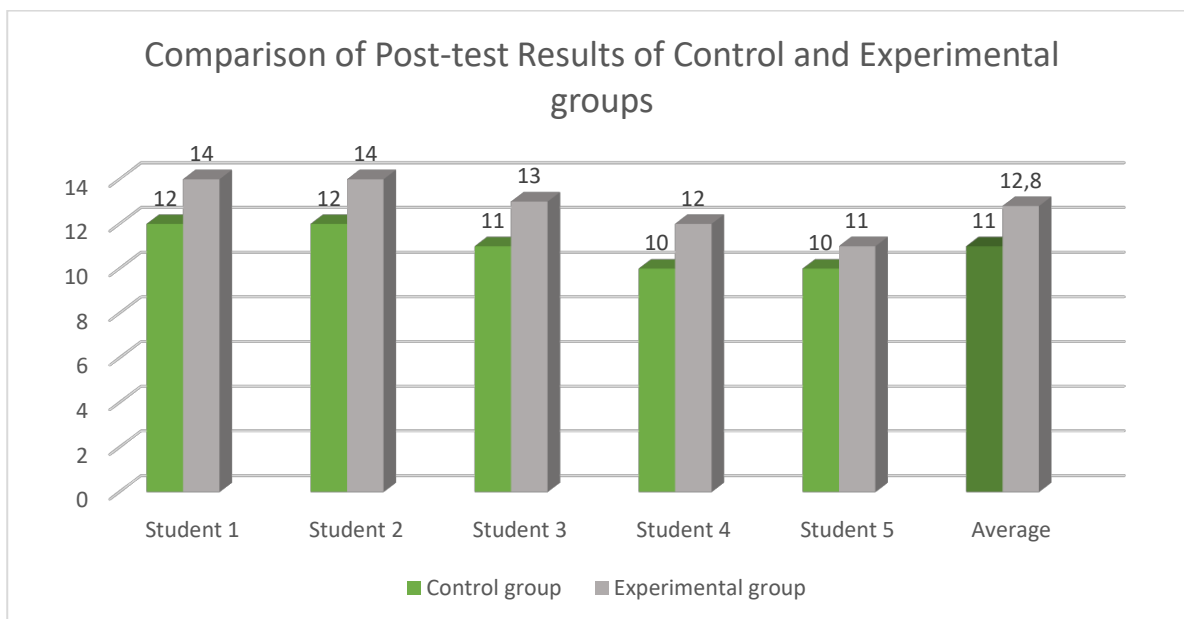
Experimental group		
<i>Nº</i>	<i>Name:</i>	<i>Points:</i>
1	Student- Camilla	14
2	Student- Evelina	14
3	Student- Mushtariy	13
4	Student- Jaloloddin	12
5	Student- Nurgul	11
<i>Total points:</i>		64

Statistics of Control group:

1. Mean: 11
2. Mode: 12, 10- bimodal
3. Median: 11

Statistics of Experimental group:

4. Mean: 12,8
5. Mode: 14- unimodal
6. Median: 13





The results of the experiment proved that the use of online platforms and applications effectively affects language proficiency in ESP classes, while simultaneously increasing motivation and interest in the learning process among students.

Furthermore, the results of the post-test proved the effectiveness of online platforms, since the experimental group showed high results in comparison with the control group. The experiment also proved that online platforms increase students' interest and attention in the classroom.

According to a survey conducted before the start of the experiment, students found learning grammar to be a boring and exhausting process. Moreover, the overall result of both groups was low for level B2. Towards the end of the experiment, another seven-structured interview was conducted with students, as a result of which 80% of students agreed that online platforms have a positive effect on the learning process, making it more interactive.

The experiment faced several obstacles despite its positive outcomes. One challenge was the limited number of participants, as a larger student cohort is necessary to foster group learning and competitiveness. Additionally, students frequently lacked internet access due to poor Wi-Fi connectivity at the university, which posed further complications during the experiment. The most notable limitation, however, was the timing constraints of the experiment.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, our study sheds light on the promising role of online language exchange platforms in improving grammar skills among B2-level ESL learners. In the digital age, these platforms offer dynamic, interactive, and flexible avenues for language acquisition, fostering engagement and personalized learning experiences. Our findings underscore the effectiveness of integrating online tools into language education, particularly in enhancing students' participation and comprehension. By employing the power of technology, educators can create immersive environments that captivate learners and cater to diverse learning styles. Moreover, our research



highlights the convenience and accessibility of online platforms, breaking down barriers to language learning and promoting inclusivity. Moving forward, it's crucial for both educators and learners to embrace the opportunities afforded by digital resources, utilizing them to maximize language proficiency and fluency. As we adapt to evolving educational landscapes, online language platforms stand as valuable tools in empowering ESL learners to confidently navigate the complexities of grammar and communication in today's interconnected world.

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