Issues in Teaching Speaking Online

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Abstract

Online education changes all components of language teaching and learning, particularly in teaching speaking. Online speaking class are usually recorded so both teachers and students can go back and watch and listen to the interaction again. This is beneficial for feedback, consolidation and correction, something that doesn't usually happen in face-to-face classrooms. However, despite the rapid growth of technology in education, some issues arise concerning with the use digital platform in teaching English. A review of literature using Cooper's framework was conducted to identify such issues. Two major categories of findings were identified: issues related to online learners included learners' readiness and participation in online class, while instructors' issue related to transitioning from face-to-face to online, time management, and teaching styles.

Keyword : issues**,** online teaching, speaking

1. Introduction

Online education has become increasingly popular in higher education within the last two decades, and most r education institutions believe that this method of instruction will be critical for the future of higher education (Allen & Seaman, 2014). The accessibility of the internet and flexibility of online courses have made online education an integral part of higher education (Li & Irby, 2008; Luyt, 2013; Lyons, 2004). In addition, financial issues facing many higher education institutions and students' demands shift the focus of these institutions more toward using online education (Limperos, Buckner, Kaufmann, & Frisby, 2015). Given the opportunities that online education provides for faculty, students, and institutions, the amount of attention it has received is not surprising (Konetes, 2011).

Many empirical studies have been conducted to examine the quality of online courses from various aspects. Studies have identified and examined critical issues a ecting quality of online education such as communication, technology, time management, pedagogy, and assessment (Bassoppo-Moyo, 2006; Conaway, Eston, & Schmit, 2005; Ko&Rossen, 2010; Limperos, et al., 2015). There are also organizations such as Quality Matters and Online Learning Consortium that focus on improving quality of online education in higher education by providing resources as well as opportunities for collaboration on curriculum development. However, the literature pertaining to online education needs literature reviews that further synthesize and integrate the empirical studies' results and provide an integrative report on existing challenges in teaching online courses. Often online educators must go through the daunting task of sifting through the increasingly expanding literature to identify these issues for themselves (Mayes, Luebeck, Yu Ku, Akarasriworn, & Korkmaz, 2011).

Furthermore, because of continued reports of high dropout rates and achievement problems in online courses (Luyt, 2013; Morris, Xu, & Finnegan, 2005; Tyler-Smith, 2006), conducting such an investigation and providing the results increasingly become critical in order to inform educators about considerations and changes necessary for improving the quality of online courses. The purpose of this study was, therefore, to inform educators about the major issues and strategies that a ect the quality of teaching online courses in higher education. We have examined the literature to identify major challenges and issues

in teaching online higher education courses, organized and provided the issues under topical classification, and provided some suggestions to address the issues for online educators.

2.Methodology

To achieve the purpose of the study, a literature review was conducted using Cooper's (1988) procedure for synthesizing literature to (a) formulate the problem, (b) collect data, (c) evaluate the appropriateness of the data, (d) analyze and interpret relevant data, and (e) organize and present the results. The results were then depicted in a model which shows the issues a ecting the teaching of online courses and the relationship among these issues. The focus of this study is on online speaking course carried out via zoom by 14 students of department of English Language Education in STAIN Mandailing Natal.

Learners' readiness

Learners' readiness to attend online courses is one of the major issues discussed in literature (Hung, Chou, Chen, & Own, 2010; Smith, Murphy, & Mahoney, 2003). Not all learners can successfully participate in online courses. Identifying and adopting learning styles and skills required to participate in online courses can be challenging for learners (Mayes et al., 2011; Luyt, 2013). Mostly the learners need to be self-motivated and selfdirected. Online instructors should be ready to help learners who lack the required learning skills. To help them, the major aspects or dimensions of readiness should be further clarified. Literature indicated that learners' technical skills related to use of computers and the Internet (Peng, Tsai, & Wu, 2006), their perceptions and attitudes toward the Internet (Tsai & Lin, 2004), their cultural and non-English backgrounds (Luyt, 2013), and their time management skills (Hill, 2002; Roper, 2007) are considered important for shaping learners' readi-ness to participate in online courses.

Learners' Participation.

Learners' nature of participation and engagement in online settings is another major issue. Researcher considered participation through interacting with peers and instructors by writing, while others suggested that learners who observed the interaction and spent time on reading more than writing were still engaged in learning. Online listening or observing is a complex phenomenon and a substantial component of learners' participation in online discussion. Romiszowski and Mason (2004) argued the assumption that infrequent contributors are "passive recipients rather than actively engaged in learning" (p.399) has been rarely challenged in research. However, online listening or observing is a form of active learning, as it consists of engagement with the content, thought, and reflection (Hrastinski, 2009). This is grounded in the concept of vicarious learning where learning occurs by observing others' active dialogue.

The implication for online instructors is to recognize and support the nature of learners' online participation. It is an oversimplified approach to judge learners' participation only by the quantity or length of their online postings. A more inclusive framework based on the social perspectives on learning discussed by Vygotsky (1978), Wenger (1998), and Saljo (2000), through which participation includes doing, talking, thinking, and feeling, which occur in both online and o ine environments may be used to more appropriately judge learners' online participation. For example, Morris, Finnegan, and Sz-Shyans (2005) used both frequency variables (e.g., counting postings) and duration

variables (e.g., seconds spending viewing postings or content pages and number of postings viewed) to identify predictor variables for learners' final course grades in their study of 354 online learners at the University of Georgia and found the duration variables were the predictors of the final grades.

Issues Related to Instructors

Transitioning from face-to-face to online

The challenge to e ectively transfer what is taught in the face-to-face classroom to online continue to be a problem. Anderson, Imdieke, and Standerford, 2011 stated that they saw one of the main challenges as the "disconnect between the way teachers were taught to teach" (p. 4), and how the course content must be delivered in an e ective online classroom. This disconnect, while not new, does present a problem as many of the teacher education programs may not have yet caught up to the evolving online teaching environments. Another challenge outlined by Anderson et al. (2011) is the almost nonexistence of institutional expectations for their online courses. These include expectations of teachers, students, courses, and sta . Without clear guidelines and expectations for faculty members to follow, there is no way to assess the e ectiveness of these online courses. Further Anderson et al. (2011) explained that the feedback they received from students seldom helped them in adjusting their teaching as they would in a face-to-face class.

Additionally, the method of online delivery varies from the traditional faceto-face education (Anderson et al., 2011; Fein & Logan, 2003; Juan et al., 2011) in that student interactions are between student and faculty, student and peers, and student

and technology. Of course, this shift in the instructor's role must be supported by the technology and the curriculum developers as illustrated in Fein and Logan (2003). Similarly, Coppola et al. (2001) described the role change for instructors as an opportunity to facilitate interactions between students and their peers. Although the interactions may vary among LMSs, they must take place to assure success of the course. Many instructors struggle with the delivery of the content and engagement of their students due to lack of visual and face to-face contact with their students (Crawley & Sugar, 2009), thus feeling less control over how to adjust their classes.

Time

One of the major issues faced by instructors is the demand on their time, as it takes quite a bit of time to prepare, plan, and teach an online class (Capra, 2011; Fein

1. Logan, 2003; Humphries, 2010). It takes faculty two times as long to prepare and teach online than face-to-face, thus spending more time per student to facilitate the class (Cavanaugh, 2005). In a time comparison study, a faculty teaching an economics class that he has taught both online and face-to- face spent 155 hours to prepare and teach the course online compared with 62 hours face-to-face (Cavanaugh, 2005). Note that the time di erence did not vary with class size—in fact, even smaller classes online demand the same amount of time. The impact of time on class development, design, and facilitation may be a deterrent to faculty interested in online courses (Crawley et al., 2009; McKenzie, Mims, Bennett, &

Waugh, 2000). Adjusting such expectations is required to successfully teach online courses (Li & Irby, 2008). Providing support and a learning community for instructors is beneficial in improving the online teaching experience (KyeiBlankson & Keengwe, 2011). While time is a major factor in online instruction issues, other minor aspects, such as instructors' interest in the modality and teacher education programs, might also be areas of concern. **Discussion**

A review of literature using Cooper's framework was conducted to identify the issues and challenges related to teaching online courses. Three major categories of findings were identified consisting of issues related to online learners, instructors, and content development. The relationship between the three major classifications and related issues are depicted in Figure 1. Issues related to learners included learners' expectations, readiness, identity, and participation in online courses. Issues related to content included the role of instructors in content development, integration of multimedia in content, role of instructional strategies in content development, and considerations for content development. Issues related to instructors included the four specific categories of changing faculty roles, transition from face-to-face to online, time management, and teaching styles. The results of this review of literature lead to the conclusion that higher education institutions need to provide professional development for instructors, trainings for learners, and technical support for the content development and delivery of online courses to address the challenges in online education and enhance the e ectiveness of online teaching and learning.

Higher education institutions play a central role in enhancing the quality of online education by providing support for instructors, learners, and content development. As shown in Figure 1, online education is a dynamic environment whose three major components of instructors, learners, and content continuously a ect each other while institutional support also greatly influences the three components.

4.Conclusion

Online education will be critical for the future of higher education (Allen & Seaman, 2014). Providing a detailed model such as shown in Figure 1 is very valuable, as it shows major issues in online education and informs educators about the challenges to be addressed to improve the quality of online education.

A number of studies suggested the importance of the support of educational institutions to actively improve the quality of online education (Lion & Stark, 2010; Prestera & Moller, 2001). However, there was a short coming in the literature regarding a classified overview of the issues that need to be supported by the educational institutions. This study bridged the gap and described and delineated major patterns of challenges found in the literature for teaching online courses. It is hoped that higher education institutions consider these challenges and as we recommended, provide professional developments for online instructors, trainings for students, and adequate support for technical issues and multimedia integration to further enhance the quality of online education.

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