

Discussion-Based Online Teaching in a Business English Communication Course: An Investigation of the Learners' Skill Enhancement, Expectations, and Readiness

Rapeepat So-In¹, Maricel Nacpil Paras², Walaiporn Chaya³
Faculty of Liberal Arts, Southeast Bangkok College, Bangkok, Thailand^{1,2,3}
E-mail: batbat11@gmail.com¹
E-mail: maricel_paras@yahoo.com²

Received: March 27, 2021; Revised: March 30, 2021, 2021; Accepted: June 15, 2021

ABSTRACT

The purposes of this study were to investigate the effects of discussion-based online teaching as an essential innovative teaching and learning technique to enhance students' communicative skills and to explore the communication and learning needs of students and their perceptions of students' involvement and readiness. The sample of the study was twenty Thai students with different background in terms of occupations, work experiences, and ages along with expectations and participation. The sample was selected by purposive random sampling technique from the students who enrolled in an online Business English course at Southeast Bangkok College. The data were collected from multiple sources, students' journals, peer observation, online lessons, interviews, project-based learning and students' feedback. The results revealed that the students developed their communicative skills after learning through online discussion-based approach. The findings emerging from an analysis of the reflective logs and feedback of students indicated that to become successful in the workplace and in their personal lives, teachers need to create a platform to give students an opportunity to connect with each other, they could be heard. Teachers should focus on teacher and learner centeredness, instructional skills in the 21st century, skills in education and professional development. It is recommended that the institution improve students' readiness in study skills and technological advancement in the absence of face-to-face teaching.

Keywords: discussion-based online teaching, students' expectations, students' involvement, students' readiness

Introduction

Since December 2019, coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic has had the impacts on the lives of people all over the world, particularly the way people live and

how students learn at schools, universities and educational institutes. The COVID 19 has severely affected education at all levels; all schools around the world have to close their teaching. According to the World Economic

Forum (2020), referring to UNESCO, 1.38 billion students were affected by the school shutdown. These changes have directly and dramatically affected the educational environment in how teaching and learning could change for the better and the worse in the long term with the coronavirus spreading rapidly across Asia, Europe, the Middle East, and the North America.

As for students, they were impacted as temporary school closures were announced in many countries to reduce the human-to-human transmission. This has taken a tremendous toll on higher education, causing millions of students across the globe to lose valuable school years. These risk-control decisions have led millions of students into temporary home-schooling situations, especially in some of the most heavily impacted countries, like China, South Korea, Italy, and Iran. These unforeseen situations are problematic for teachers, parents, school administrators and educational institutions, especially for tertiary students planning to apply for university admission and the graduates pursuing a career after graduation.

Concerns relating to the COVID-19 pandemic prevention measure have required a sudden, and change in the way most aspects of life are conducted, education being only one of many aspects heavily impacted. Therefore, changes are made to both the methods and facilities used in the current educational environment. Instructors, staff, and learners are expected to *Work-From Home* (WFM); nevertheless, they are still expected to carry out their duties and responsibilities. Therefore, they are exploring new teaching and learning approaches to address the challenges of educational innovation and future

transformation for survival and lifelong learning. Educators do not have different opinion in this regard, but they are trying to find and provide solutions and design appropriate teaching methods that can be adapted to the content for which they are responsible for.

One of the most important teaching methods arising to reduce the impact of Covid-19 and slow the spread is through “online learning”, the practice of social and physical distancing. Online language learning has already been an increasingly popular and useful method of language acquisition prior to spike in demand for alternative learning methods brought upon by the Covid-19 pandemic. Online language learning has increasingly become a new normal for students around the world, and especially, Thai EFL learners due to the fact that it is a tool that allows learning to continue without undue risk of infection. As such, the university’s policy is to offer English language courses through online learning technology. Through this policy, the university must ensure that the undergraduate Thai EFL learners of the affected semester(s) are using online learning media that is appropriate for learners’ background knowledge level. (Kawinkoonlasate, 2020, p.17).

Today, Thai students are likely to be technological but still lack English skills. Although this may be true, students struggle to learn English since it is the language of the world, the language of business such as aviation science, computer science, diplomacy and tourism and access to the edutainment. Many students are ambitious enough to enhance their communication skills as it is a requirement when attending university,

studying abroad, and engaging with colleagues at work. Since English is the international language for communication, students with high English proficiency level have more opportunity of getting a good job at a multinational company in their home country or to find work abroad. Also, acquiring English is essential for retrieving information, socializing as well as in every professional occupation. Although learning English can be challenging and time-consuming, we can see that it is also very valuable to learn and can create many opportunities in life.

However, for Thai students, becoming successful in learning the English language needs more practice and skills than any other subjects. In order to communicate in English successfully, the English language learners need to practice four skills of English: listening, speaking, reading and writing. English is very necessary for this reason, which speaking skill is an essential part of a speaker to effectively apply the language spoken to be used in the extensive world of social online and used to communicate with other people all over the world (Noom-ura, 2013).

Therefore, for successful implementation of educational change because of the COVID19, this study employed online discussion, namely, discussion-based online teaching as a technological tool to help the English language learners taking the English for Organizational Communication course to have more confidence and speaking skills. This could help them to be better, fluent, and

accurate to speak English with foreigners and gaining more opportunities in their future careers.

This paper reported the study on the implementation of discussion-based online teaching and learning and discussed reaction, and results obtained from the learners' discussion in the online platform. These results were also gathered from a combination of recorded online lessons, students' journals, peer observation, interviews, project-based learning and students' feedback and measured learning outcome.

Research Questions

Two main research questions were addressed

1. How does online discussion-based teaching help to facilitate students' communicative skills? and if they can create meaningful conversations easily through online classroom community?
2. How does online discussion-based teaching encourage and engage the students to share their willingness to communicate and collaboration over the study period?

Objectives

1. To investigate the effects of discussion-based online teaching as an essential innovative teaching and learning technique to enhance students' communication skills
2. To explore the communication and expectations of students and perceptions of students' involvements and readiness

4. Conceptual Framework

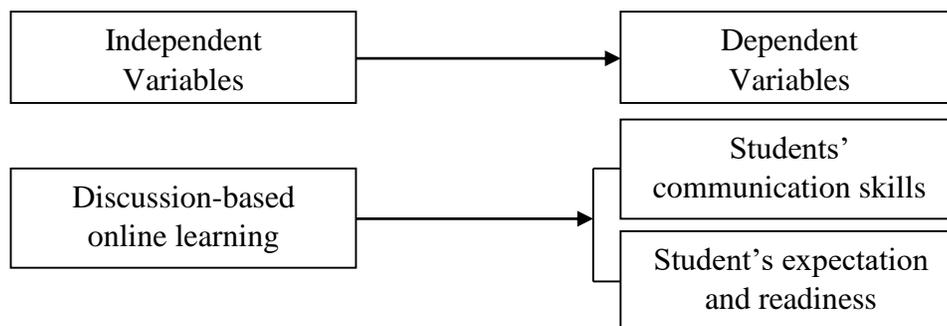


Figure 1 Conceptual Framework

Reviews of Literature

Online Learning

Online learning, e-learning, virtual learning, Internet-enhanced learning, and distance learning are different names for the same learning process (Moore, Dickson-Deane, Galyen, & Chen (2011). It is one of the most popular forms of e-learning via the Web. Hockly (2015) defines online language learning as language learning that takes place fully online, via the internet without a face-to-face component. Kasteen (2014) states that online instruction has become a prominent part of second language learning and shares that it is often referred to as computer assisted language learning. This process relies on technology-mediated methods of interaction and communication. It happens in an online environment with no physical interaction. It is a digital version of the previous distance learning system, which did not include face-to-face instruction. It takes place completely in digital learning contexts. It includes any activity delivered by electronic mails, posted on websites, or used in web-based materials.

Research suggested that to succeed in online learning, learners must be able to motivate themselves, manage their time wisely, take responsibility for their own learning, and participate in the give-and-takeoff electronic discussions (Collett,

2000, cited in Porter & O'Connor, 2001; Rovai, 2003; Smith, Murphy, & Mahoney, 2003). Furthermore, Derrick emphasized that they must be initiative, be resourceful, demonstrate persistence, and believe in their ability to organize and carry out the actions needed to engage in learning (Derrick, 2003). Online learners need to be able to solve problems, to evaluate and to monitor their own learning.

The nature of instruction also plays a big role in successful online learning, and online instructors vary in their ability to help students succeed. Johnson and Aragon identified the following seven general pedagogical principles as critical for success in online learning environments: (1) Address individual differences. (2) Motivate the students. (3) Avoid information overload. (4) Create a real-life context. (5) Encourage social interaction. (6) Provide hands-on activities. (7) Encourage student reflection (Aragon, 2003).

Connectivism for Digital Learning

As cited in Simens (2005), the three learning theories most widely utilized in the creation of teaching environments are behaviorism, cognitivism, and constructivism. However, they were developed when learning was unaffected through technology. Over twenty years,

technology has restructured the way we live, communicate, and learn. Therefore, learning principles and processes, should be reflective of underlying social environments. Also learning must be a way of being – an ongoing set of attitudes and actions by individuals and groups that they employ to try to keep abreast of the surprising, novel, messy, obtrusive, recurring events...” (Vaill, 1996, p.42). Today, these principles have been changed. Knowledge is growing exponentially. knowledge is created beyond the level of individual human participants, and is constantly shifting and changing. Knowledge in networks is not controlled or created by any formal organization, although organizations can and should ‘plug in’ to this world of constant information flow, and draw meaning from it. In many fields the life of knowledge is now measured in months not forty years or a lifetime as ever. Half of what is known today was not known 10 years ago. (Siemens, 2005) “One of the most persuasive factors is the shrinking half-life of knowledge. The amount of knowledge in the world has doubled in the past 10 years and is doubling every 18 months according to the American Society of Training and Documentation (ASTD). To fight against the shrinking half-life of knowledge, organizations have been forced to develop new ways of deploying instruction (Gonzalez, 2004). Many learners will move into a variety of different, possibly unrelated fields over the course of their lifetime. Formal education no longer becomes a significant aspect of our learning experience. Learning now occurs in a variety of ways – through communities of practice, personal networks, and through completion of work-related tasks. Learning and work-related activities are no longer separate. Learning is a continual process and lasting for a

lifetime. Technology is altering our brains. The tools we use define and shape our thoughts and ideas. The organization and the individual are both learning organisms. Increased attention to knowledge management highlights the need for a theory that attempts to explain the link between individual and organizational learning. Many of the processes previously handled by learning theories (especially in cognitive information processing) can now be supported by technology. Know-how and know-what is being supplemented with know-where (Siemens, 2005)

Discussion-Based Online Learning

Online discussion are now widely used teaching tools through which students can share ideas, formulate understanding and develop social bonds with peers and instructors. The text-based nature of the discussion boards presents an opportunity for educational researchers to actively analyze discussion threads in order to determine if deep learning is facilitated in this new learning medium (Meyer, 2004). Researchers (Holmes, 2005; Seethamraju, 2014; Iman & Angraini, 2019; Al Qunayeer , 2020) have paid much attention to how to promote learners’ online discussion and participation in various online domains and disciplines. According to Akmal (2017), on-line discussion forum (ODF) is an e-learning platform that allows admin to post certain topics to be discussed in which pre-service students can share and type their ideas, suggestions, solutions or remarks upon the topic. With the existence of the teacher as the admin, the forum can stimulate critical thinking, improve communication skills, foster a sense of community among students, and encourage collaborative problems solving. ODF in this setting provides an ample opportunity for improving writing skill of pre-service students because they have more time to think about the topic being studied and to

search more information before writing their own in the forum or even the students are able to view feedbacks made by other students and the admin before writing their own (p.1345).

Online participation is founded on Vygotsky's (1980) social learning perspective and the situated learning theory of Lave and Wenger (1991). Within the constructivist view of learning particularly, Vygotsky's (1980) social learning perspective, "individuals create their own new understandings, based upon the interaction of what they already know and believe, and the phenomena or ideas with which they come into contact" (Richardson, 2005, p. 3). This is supported by Wang's study (2019) as he describes:

Vygotsky's sociocultural learning theory considered that social interaction was fundamental in human learning and development. Online discussion provided a platform for students to carry on anytime and anywhere dialogues, thus an ideal tool to facilitate student learning in a social environment. Due to its unique features, online discussion was being integrated as a critical component into student learning. Students engaged in collaborative critical inquiry through online discussion, articulating thoughts, formulating hypothesis, negotiating meanings, and socially constructing knowledge (p. 113)

Based on these theories, researchers have argued that online learners' participation is not only a process of active engagement in online discussions or activities, but it also involves different social relations among learners. In other words, these researchers claim that active online participation is about students' intensity of posting and commenting online and their social connections and relations.

The benefits of using online discussion forums and peer to peer learning for enhancing student learning are well-

known. Other than in full online courses, their adoption in traditional learning environments complementing face-to-face teaching is increasing (Gao, Zhang, & Franklin, 2013) and has now become a common educational strategy in higher education. In fact, interest in using online discussion forum as an indicator of students' performance is increasing. Online discussion forums are expected to enable flexible and independent learning and knowledge construction, and develop critical thinking skills (Seethamraju, 2014).

Previous studies revealed that online discussion forum effectively improved several aspects of students' skills such as their communication skills, course performance, internet efficacy, collaborative skill, socializing skill, and problem solving. In one study, Webb et al. (2005) compared groups working with difference "doses" of online component in case method instruction from purely online to purely face-to-face. According to them, members that were under heavy online conditions had more positive perceptions of peer interaction during the discussion than others, and they outperformed the face-to-face students in terms of conceptual and factual knowledge about the case discussed. These findings must be treated with caution because of the differences in the cases and topics taught to these different groups. Furthermore, it is possible that the newly developed online skills rather than increasing dose of online discussion may have contributed to these positive findings. In another study (Park et al., 2015), the findings showed that teachers varied their roles from managing the discussions, switching topics, providing information, and seeking clarifications to commenting on social aspects, and opening and closing discussions.

In a recent study, Alghasab et al. (2019), reported various functions of

instructor's comments on students' collaborative writing discussions via Wiki, including setting collaborative ground, guiding learners through the steps of writing, giving praises on students' contributions, giving feedback, promoting contributions, acting as an editor, adopting the role of monitor, and suggesting resources. This study also suggests that the type of role assumed by teachers affects the way learners interact in online discussions. The above issues and gaps in earlier research suggest the need to use a content analysis of learners' online posts and comments in peer review through a variety of platforms as this will contribute to better understand the patterns of interactions among learners and the role of instructors in promoting learners' interactions in online group discussions.

In addition to the above study, Wang (2019) employed a design-based research on designing, implementing, and investigating assessment rules in online discussion. The study was conducted in discussion-based online courses at a large urban university in the United States. Participants were graduate students; the majority of the participants were currently school teachers. Student discussion postings and written reflections were collected over the time span of three semesters. Content analysis was applied in analyzing student postings. Students' written reflections were analyzed to corroborate the results of the content analysis. The content analysis showed that the number of student summarizing postings was the lowest. Students posted on new ideas and thoughts, and their postings were on various aspects of each learning theory: major principles, implementation in the teaching practice, technological support, and assessment alignment. They also added to each other's postings to increase the breadth and depth of the discussion.

Students commented and elaborated on previous postings to enhance their understanding of each learning theory. They mostly responded to the questions and said that questions helped them to clarify confusions and misconceptions.

In summary, discussion-based online can engage people in collective reflection, exchangeable perspectives and cross-cultural understanding. This utilizes chat and dialogue tools to improve their understanding of the subject. On the positive side, it unlocks the difficulty of the students in learning English because the main teaching materials have traditionally been print-based packages that are mailed to students by using electronic communication. Two instructional approaches were one centered on printed core materials and the other on computer-based study materials. The efficiency of online learning built upon a unique relationship between the learners and instructors for the purpose of sharing opinions and validation. Strategies need to be developed on the students' readiness and proper motivation that can be fully absorbed in the online learning process.

Research Methodology

The study was a qualitative study. The participants were 20 undergraduate students enrolled in 100113 English for Organizational Communication at Southeast Bangkok College. The majority of learners were adult learners, all Thai nationalities with different background, work experiences and ages. Fifteen percent aged between 14-20 and eighty-five percent aged between 21-40. The questionnaire was used in this study. It consisted of four sections, A, B, C and D. Section A sought information on the respondents' personal information, Section B sought information on the availability of internet and online tools within the institution and personal

acquisition by lectures and students. Section C sought information on the level of possession of basic Information and Communication Technology (ICT) skills, while section D sought information on the respondents' readiness towards the use of online method of instruction on both advantages and disadvantages. The online discussion board was used as major learning medium in the course. In addition, students' journals, peer observation, online lessons, interviews, project-based learning and students' feedback were also employed. The researcher and co-researcher were instructors and outside observers of the class. No course instruction or curricular control was directed or guided in any way by the researcher or by this study. The students were required additional speaking practice to substitute the face-to-face classroom practice during the COVID19 shutdown. The course was designed to enhance learners to practice oral communication in business context. The students were required to study this course as a compulsory course for graduation, and the time for study was 15 weeks totally 45 hours. This included 15 hours for classroom and 30 hours for online learning.

Data Collection

The study was conducted from January 16 to May 16, 2020. Each student was given four months to complete all, online interaction, asynchronous and synchronous interaction which is important components for EFL learning and teaching in blended learning environments. Through the length of the study, 45 hours in total, this course thus employed face-to-face oral speaking tasks, discussion boards, asynchronous chat, electronic bulletin boards, and e-mails as substitutes for classroom interactions. Follow-up interview were also done for one month.

The data for the study were collected through multiple resources both from in-class

instruction and online learning including face to face interaction, students' weekly journals, peer observation, speaking performance (content of their discussion), in-depth review, online lessons, and students' feedback via written evaluation forms. The questions were open-ended with no limits to a set of options which provided the students to reflect and examine their situations in an open mindset. Open-ended questions were free-form survey questions that allowed all the students to answer in an open text format such that they could answer based on their competency, knowledge, feeling, and understanding. Open-ended questions could be a tool to engage students in cognitively challenging conversations and help develop linguistic advantages for language learners. In this process, open ended questions play an important role in encouraging students to express and elaborate upon their thinking and providing rationales for their thoughts (Lee, Kinzie, & Whittaker, 2012), and they are also very important in facilitating extended conversation.

The instructional procedure started with the explanation of the objectives of the discussion task, followed by the classroom-based case study discussion to give students practice on case study analysis. The instructor then presented the topic of discussion related to business. The instructor, as the facilitator, arranged the discussion setting by posting the first question, and selected four students for each team. The instructor opened the discussion session and let the students from each group give their opinion/viewpoints as well as the argument dealing with the topics given. During discussion, the students of each group were allowed to propose objection and questions. The lecturer let the students from the Cons group give a counter statement and their opinion/argument proposed from the Pros group. The instructor asked each discussion member to summarize their discussion. In the last session of the class, the

teacher posted the question as the topic of discussion for the next lesson.

After each lesson, the students were assigned to write a journal, as individual work by responding to reflect their learning process, describing what they had learned in the class. The learning journals for reflective writing let the students recall of what they thought about what had occurred in the classroom. Their opinions and perceptions added a different and valuable perspective. Then the learners were required to submit their individual notebook, autograph and short biography via e-mail. They also described their individual reactions and feelings and those they observed on the part of the teaching and learning. In peer observation, an invited colleague, the expert on the subject matter, was consulted for a collaborative teaching and collected information about the teacher's lessons. The tasks were critical observation and through note taking. This related back to the area the researcher has identified to reflect upon such as focusing on which students contributed the most in the lesson and what different patterns of interaction occurred or how the participants dealt with errors.

For online discussion lessons, the steps were the same as the procedures discussed above, but the time was scheduled for 10 weeks. At the end of the discussion-based

online teaching, the students were required to complete the evaluation form as feedback with 10 closed-ended and four open-ended questions, and the in-depth interviews were also conducted.

Data Analysis

The data collected were reviewed and analyzed using reflective writing rubric through watch-write-think: depth of reflection, use of textual evidence and historical context, language use and conventions. The responses of the discussion were analyzed by content analysis of the responses, and the main themes were categorized, and the frequency of the responses was counted and calculated into percentage. The results of data analysis were then presented in tables and of in different figures.

Findings

The first research question was to discover how online discussion-based teaching helps to facilitate students' communicative skills, and if they can create meaningful conversations easily through online classroom community. Demographic characteristics and data of 20 participants taking part in the study were presented in Table 1

Table 1 *Demographic Characteristics of Participants*

Participants	Gender	Age Level	Field of Interest Secondary/ Bachelor/Master/Do ctoral	Occupational Level Students/ Employees	Usage of English at School/ Workplace	Percentage (%) of Using English in Daily Routines
Student 1	Male	20	Organizational Communication	IT Security	Yes	67%
Student 2	Male	25	Organizational Communication	IT Support	No	49%
Student 3	Female	25	Organizational Communication	Purchasing and Store Staff	Yes	78%
Student 4	Female	24	Organizational Communication	Customer Service Officer	Yes	72%
Student 5	Male	22	Organizational Communication	IT Support	Yes	71%

Student 6	Male	25	Organizational Communication	Businessman	No	50%
Student 7	Male	24	Organizational Communication	IT Support	Yes	78%
Student 8	Female	27	Organizational Communication	Customer Service Officer	Yes	79%
Student 9	Male	33	Organizational Communication	Civil Service Officer	Yes	60%
Student 10	Male	24	Organizational Communication	IT Support	Yes	92%
Student 11	Female	22	Organizational Communication	Administrative Officer	Yes	82%
Student 12	Male	25	Organizational Communication	Merchant Seller	Yes	73%
Student 13	Male	21	Organizational Communication	Computer Graphics Designer	Yes	84%
Student 14	Male	25	Organizational Communication	Thai Soldier	Yes	73%
Student 15	Male	40	Organizational Communication	IT Support Supervisor	Yes	86%
Student 16	Male	14	English Grammar and Vocabulary	secondary student	Yes	100%
Student 17	Male	35	Business English	Professional Lawyer	Yes	90%
Student 18	Female	27	Business English	Graphics Designer	Yes	90%
Student 19	Female	18	IELTS Listening and Speaking	Secondary Student	Yes	90%
Student 20	Male	39	Academic Writing	Legal Officer	Yes	90%

Table 2 shows the assessment of the students' communicative skill achievements as well as the students' grades at the end of the course.

Table 2 *Students' English Skills in Percentage and the Final Grades*

Participants	Gender	Age	Reading and Writing Skills (1-100%)	Listening Skills and Vocabulary Enrichment (1-100%)	Speaking Skills (1-100%)	Final Grades
Student 1	Male	20	65	78	70	B
Student 2	Male	25	72	80	63	B
Student 3	Female	25	74	84	88	B
Student 4	Female	24	73	80	68	C+
Student 5	Male	22	71	87	70	B
Student 6	Male	25	72	87	65	C
Student 7	Male	24	73	89	89	C
Student 8	Female	27	74	85	89	B+
Student 9	Male	33	68	75	40	C
Student 10	Male	24	95	93	84	A
Student 11	Female	22	84	93	80	B+
Student 12	Male	25	64	75	95	B+
Student 13	Male	21	79	93	97	A
Student 14	Male	25	70	81	80	C
Student 15	Male	40	82	96	95	B+
Student 16	Male	14	80	85	90	A
Student 17	Male	35	80	90	95	C+
Student 18	Female	27	80	85	90	B+
Student 19	Female	18	90	80	95	A
Student 20	Male	39	75	90	95	A

According to the students' grades and English proficiency, 50% of the students attained the acceptable grade of A and B+, 20% satisfactory grade of B, 30% needs improvement for grade C+ and C. All of the

students enrolled in this course gained higher percentage of English proficiency (the cut off score is 50 out of 100). Figure 1 illustrates the bar graphs for the students' final grades.

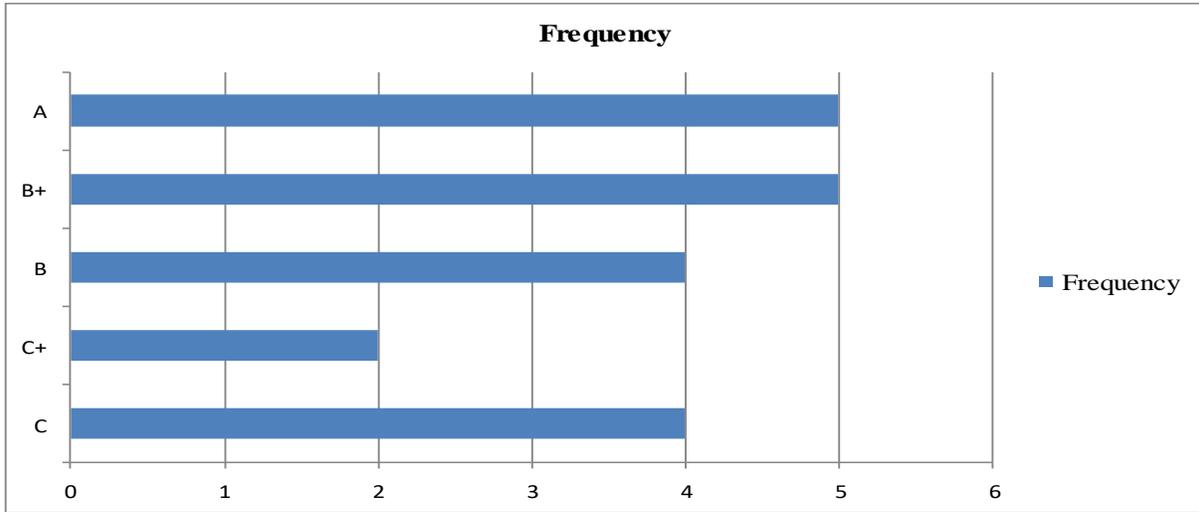


Figure 2 The Students' Final Grades

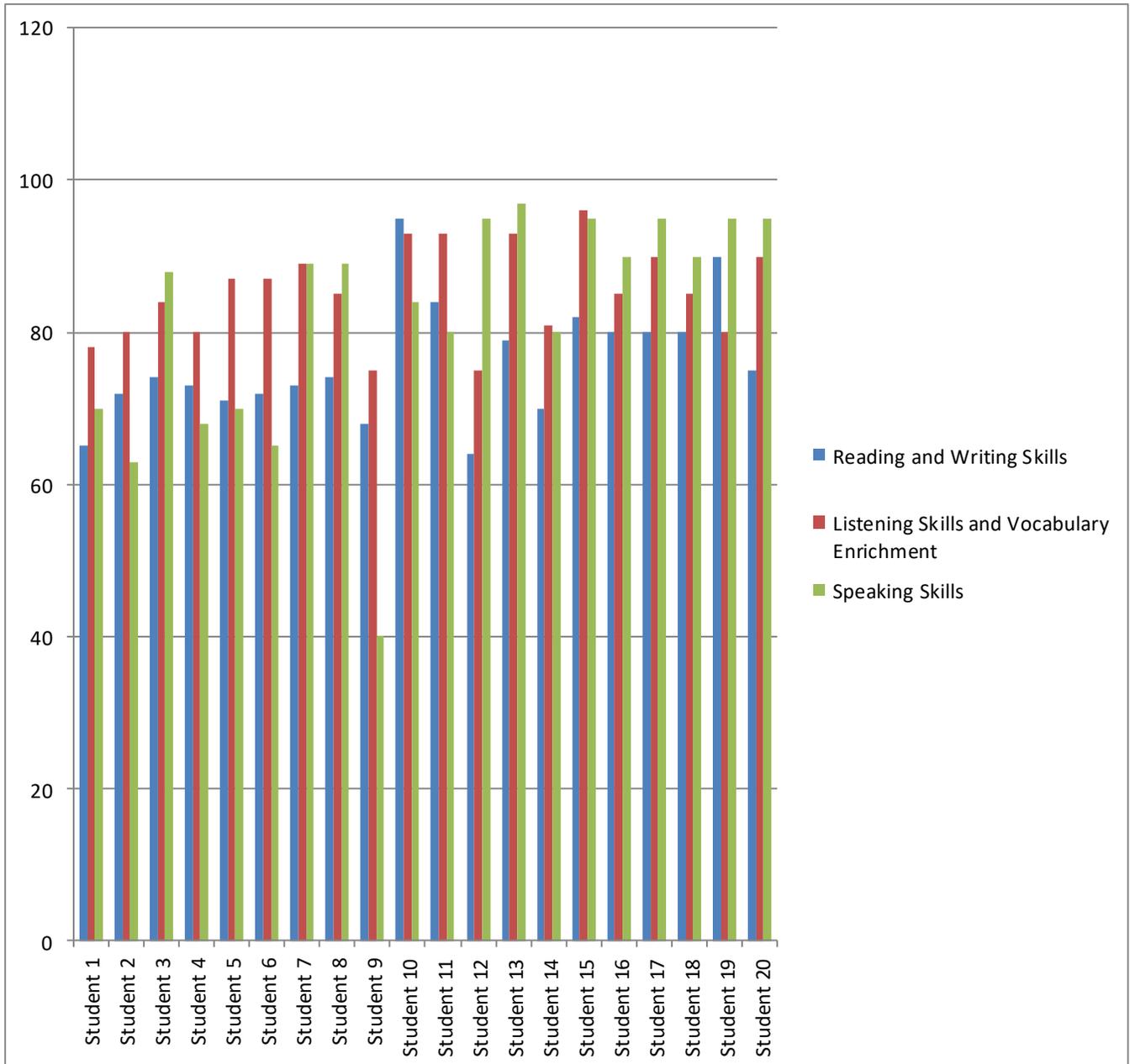


Figure 3 The Students' English Proficiency

The vertical line represents the percentage allotment for the students' communicative skills while the horizontal line represents the number of students.

The second research question was to examine how online discussion-based teaching encourages and engages students to share their willingness and collaboration over the study period.

Table 3 *The Students' Scores for Content Analysis (Content of the message, Grammar Structure, Choice of words, Pronunciation) of their Discussion-Based Online Learning*

Participants	Content of the Message	Grammar Structures	Choice of Words	Fluency/ Pronunciation
Student 1	20	16	16	18
Student 2	15	18	15	15
Student 3	21	24	23	20
Student 4	18	20	15	15
Student 5	20	16	15	15
Student 6	15	15	20	15
Student 7	20	23	22	24
Student 8	22	24	23	20
Student 9	10	10	10	10
Student 10	20	24	24	20
Student 11	20	20	20	20
Student 12	24	23	24	24
Student 13	24	24	24	25
Student 14	20	22	18	20
Student 15	22	24	24	24
Student 16	20	20	21	22
Student 17	23	20	23	23
Student 18	22	22	20	20
Student 19	23	22	22	24
Student 20	20	20	21	22

legend: 23-25 = excellent 20-22 = good 15-19 = satisfactory 1-14 = needs improvement

Rubric: Content of the Message (25 marks) / Grammar Structures (25 marks) /Choice of Words (25 marks/Fluency and Pronunciation (25 marks) = 100 total marks

Table 3 shows that on grammar, students were able to express their ideas and responses fairly well, but made mistakes with their tenses, However, they can be able to correct themselves with the foreign teacher. In pronunciation, students were slightly unclear with the pronunciation at times, but generally were fair. Nevertheless, this did not interfere communication with the teacher. On vocabulary or choice of words, some of the students can be able to use rich, precise and impressive usage of vocabulary words acquired on online teaching.

On the other hand, some students utilized the words learned in an accurate

manner for the situation given. Student fairly grasped some of the questions and topics that were being discussed. On the content of the message, the students were satisfactorily lacked background knowledge of the topics that hindered their responses to the questions being asked. As a result, the teacher added more topics to convey the issue and was able to add more information to their responses. Speech was mostly smooth, but with some hesitation and unevenness caused primarily by rephrasing and grouping for words. Table 4 summarizes the students' feedback.

Table 4 *Sample Feedback from the Students*

Student 1: “excited”	Student 11: “excited”
Student 2: “happy”	Student 12: “excited, I never study online speaking before.”
Student 3: “excited”	Student 13: “excellent, better than classroom learning”
Student 4: “excited”	Student 14: “exciting”
Student 5: “excited”	Student 15: “exciting, improve self-confidence”
Student 6: “just fine”	Student 16: “It can improve my grammar.”
Student 7: “good”	Student 17: “It can enhance my vocabulary words.”
Student 8: “excited to talk to you”	Student 18: “This can practice speaking with a foreigner.”
Student 9: “excited”	Student 19: “This can improve my speaking abilities.”
Student 10: “one-on-one speaking is preferable”	Student 20: “This is better for my academic writing for further studies overseas.”

Table 4 shows that the students had positive feedback towards the discussion-based online teaching and the level of responses was varied in accordance with the gained insights and to comprehend the responses of the learners. In addition, the findings also detailed each student's reaction “*if the teacher's lesson went well. If the student doesn't seem to understand: or if the student doesn't focus well; if the students did not seem to understand: or if the students did not focus well. If a lesson went well, we can describe it and think about why it was successful. If the students did not understand a language point that we introduced, we need to think about what we did and why it may have been unclear. If students were not paying attention to the details, what were they doing, when and why?*” However, without more time spent focusing why things were happening in a face-to-face online learning, teachers jumped to conclusions that instructionalized materials need to be adjusted. Through online teaching, therefore, it implied a more systematic process of collecting, recording and analyzing our thoughts and observations, as well as those of our students, and then going on to making changes. This will yield to teacher and student-centered approach with blended-learning style.

Discussions

According to the findings of the discussion-based online teaching and learning, various aspects both of advantages and disadvantages can be discussed. The online classroom learning is just another learning environment, in some ways similar or different from the traditional classrooms. As we develop the environment, we adjust our teaching methods which are valid indication of online learning. A few more variations for running classroom activities, whether individual work, paired-work and small group, are evidently seen and closely monitored and checked if the tasks have been understood and that the students are doing what the teacher intended them to do. First, if the materials and tasks were well-prepared and the instructions were clear, then the activity could largely run itself. Second, students were allowed to work on the tasks without too much interference. Third, students were able to express their ideas and responses adequately, but often displayed inconsistencies with their sentence structure and tenses. Fourth, students were slightly unclear with pronunciation at times, but generally were fair. Fifth, students were able to use broad vocabulary words, but was lacking, making them repetitive and could not expand on

their ideas. Sixth, students were able to comprehend and respond to most of the questions and topics being discussed. Moreover, students presented excellent background knowledge from class topics and were able to add more information in their responses due to the provision of online teaching materials and resources. Finally, speech was effortless and smooth with speed that came close to that of a native speaker if the teacher was keen to know the real problem and find out the way to solve that problem of their English-speaking skills. Although the teachers and

students were equally responsible for the English proficiency levels, yet the teachers were more responsible by having the professional knowledge and skills imparted to the learners. By incorporating a constructivist approach to designing and implementing online learning can provide the teacher and student with a variety of learning opportunities achieving the objective of meaningful learning. Figure 1.1 below is a representation of Jonassen's characteristics of meaningful learning (Jonassen et al., p. 3).



The way an online learning environment is designed is largely affected by the teacher's philosophy of understanding of educational learning theories. As educators, it is important we reflect upon the nature of how people learn and consciously utilize educational theory as the foundation to construct meaningful learning experiences in our online classrooms.

Conclusions, Implications and Recommendations

In order to create an online classroom community for students' engagement, collaboration and enhancement of 21st century skills, most students need more international professors to teach English subjects and more activities in the classroom to practice English skills. Thai students need more skills or techniques to acquire highly sophisticated vocabulary to make a

sentence in English in order to have adequate words to communicate. Even if the students know how to improve and solve a problem, the important thing for them is to try to speak out a new word and sentence, and do not be shy to speak even if the grammar is wrong. Therefore, learning in discussion-based online teaching helps remove their language barriers and make them feel confident. This corresponds to cognitive engagement as the active process of learning as Bowen (2005) stated that this type of engagement is the most fundamental form of engagement. Student engagement transcends the classroom and affords students the opportunity to become co-creators of their own learning and knowledge development. This was also supported by Fredricks, Blumenfeld, and Paris (2004) who identified cognitive engagement as students engaged in the learning process to "comprehend complex ideas and master difficult skills" (p. 60). In

order for meaningful learning to occur the task that students pursue should engage active, constructive, intentional, authentic, and cooperative activities. To be successful in the workplace and in their personal lives, teachers must create a platform to give students a chance to connect with each other and be heard. In addition, the research findings revealed that to deal with and survive in their professional field, the teachers need to grow and bring changes in their behaviors and styles. Rather than testing inert knowledge, teachers should help students to learn to recognize and solve problems, comprehend new phenomena, construct mental models of those phenomena, and given a new situation, set goals and regulate their own learning (learn how to learn). Online education is, therefore, an innovation that the teachers need to mediate for their career development. After all, universities and professors have most effect on students, so there should be more activities to practice English and learning from themselves is the best way to succeed in the development of English skills. Faculty perceptions of the impact of administrative factors on their online teaching effectiveness revealed six key considerations: scheduling, course design, multimedia, curriculum, faculty

development, and faculty support. Faculty support in this study related to schedule consistency, advance notice of teaching assignments, and feedback/guidance on teaching. Faculty respondents in this study prioritized a consistent schedule and advanced notification of the classes that they teach. As administrators, there are a number of things we can do to meet faculty needs in regard to scheduling such as developing better projections of student enrollment so that schedule projection occurs more efficiently for the future. It is recommended that university administrators focus on the integration of multimedia in the curriculum to ensure that faculty have the necessary tools for effective teaching.

Acknowledgements

The researchers acknowledge the support, encouragement and extension for this research by our online teaching colleagues, students and advisors. The researchers greatly appreciate their invaluable guidance and availability throughout the course of this study. In addition, the researcher would like to thank all the participants for sparing their time to take part in the discussion-based online teaching and learning.

References

- Akmal, A. (2017). Impact of web-based learning on EFL: Using On-line Discussion Forum (ODF) to enhance students' writing skills. *Universal Journal of Educational Research* 5(8): 1345-1348. Retrieved from <http://www.hrpub.org>. DOI: 10.13189/ujer.2017.0508.
- Alghasab, M., Hardman, J., & Handley, Z. (2019). Teacher-student interaction on wikis: Fostering collaborative learning and writing. *Learning, Culture and Social Interaction*, 21, 10-20. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.lcsi.2018.12.002>.
- Al Qunayeer, H. S. (2020). Exploring EFL learners' online participation in online peer writing discussions through a Facebook group. *Journal of Information Technology Education: Research*, 19: 671-692.
- Aragon, S. (2003). *An Instructional Strategy Framework for Online Learning Environments*. Texas, USA: Texas State University.

- Bowen, S. (2005). Engaged learning: Are we all on the same page. *Peer Review*, 7(2): 4–7.
- Dickson-Deane, C., Galyen, K. & Chen, W. (2011). Designing for E-learn, Online, and Distance Learning Environments: Are They the Same? Retrieved from <https://www.researchgate.net/publication/233751524>.
- Fear, W. J., & Erikson-Brown, A. (2014). Good quality discussion is necessary but not sufficient in asynchronous tuition: A brief narrative review of the literature. *Asynchronous Learning Networks*, 18(2): 1-6.
- Fredricks, J. A., Blumenfeld, P. C., & Paris, A. H. (2004). School engagement: Potential of the concept, state of the evidence. *Review of Educational Research*, 74(1): 59–109. doi: 10.3102/00346543074001059.
- Gao, F., Zhang, T. & Franklin, T. (2013). Designing asynchronous online discussion environments: recent progress and possible future directions. *The British Journal of Educational Technology*, 44 (3): 469–483.
- Gonzalez, C. (2004). The Role of Blended Learning in the World of Technology. Retrieved December 10, 2004 from <http://www.unt.edu/benchmarks/archives/2004/september04/eis.htm>
- Hockly, N. (2015, July). Developments in online language learning. *ELT Journal*, 69(3): 308-313. <https://doi.org/10.1093/elt/ccv020>.
- Holmes, K. (2005). Analysis of asynchronous online discussion using the SOLO taxonomy. *Australian Journal of Educational & Developmental Psychology*. 5, 117-127.
- Iman, J.N. & Angraini, N. (2019). Discussion task model in EFL classroom: EFL learners' perception, oral proficiency, and critical thinking achievements. *Pedagogika Online* 133(1): 43–62.
- Jonassen, D. H., & Strobel, J. (2006). *Modeling for meaningful learning*. In *Engaged learning with emerging technologies* (pp. 1-27). Springer Netherlands. http://dx.doi.org/10.1007/1-4020-3669-8_1
- Kasteen, J. (2014). Global trends in foreign language demand and proficiency. In ICEF Monitor. Retrieved from <http://studenttravelplanningguide.com/global-trends-in-foreignlanguagedemand-and-proficiency>.
- Kawinkoonlasate, P. (2020). Online language learning for Thai EFL learners: An analysis of effective alternative learning methods in response to the Covid-19 outbreak. *English Language Teaching*, 13(12): 15-26.
- Kellert, S. H. (1994). In the wake of chaos: Unpredictable order in dynamical systems. University of Chicago press.
- Lee, Y., Kinzie, M. B., & Whittaker, J. V. (2012). Impact of online support for teachers' open-ended questioning in Pre-k science activities. *Teaching & Teacher Education*, 28, 568-577. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.tate.2012.01.002>.
- McBride, N. (2005). Chaos theory as a model for interpreting information systems in organizations. *Information Systems Journal*, 15(3); 233-254.

- Meyer, K. (2004). Evaluating Online Discussions: Four Different Frames of Analysis, *Journal of Asynchronous Learning Networks*, 8(2).
- Noom-ura, S. (2013). English-teaching problems in Thailand and Thai teachers' professional development needs. *English Language Teaching*, 6(11): 139-147.
- Park, J., Schallert, D. L., Sanders, A. J., Williams, K. M., Seo, E., Yu, L. T., Vogler, J. S., Song, K., Williamson, Z. H., & Knox, M. C. (2015). Does it matter if the teacher is there? A teacher's contribution to emerging patterns of interactions in online classroom discussions. *Computers & Education*, 82: 315-328. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.compedu.2014.11.019>.
- Porter, P., & O'Connor, L. (2001). What Makes Distance Learning Effective? Support Mechanisms to Maximize the Impact of Distance Learning in Adult Education. A report to the Massachusetts ABE Distance Learning Project. Retrieved on June 30, 2007, from http://anywhereanytimeabe.org/?page_id=26.
- Richardson, V. (2005). Constructivist teaching and teacher education: Theory and practice in V. Richardson (Ed.) *Constructivist teacher education: Building a new world of understanding* (p3-14), Harmer Press.
- Seethamraju, R. (2014). Effectiveness of using online discussion forum for case study analysis. *Education Research International*, 1-10. Retrieved from <http://dx.doi.org/10.1155/2014/589860>.
- Siemens, G. (2005). "Connectivism: A learning theory for the digital age (2005)." elearnspace. Disponível em: < http://www.ingedewaard.net/papers/connectivism/2005_siemens_ALearningTheoryForTheDigitalAge.pdf >. Acesso em 5 (2012).
- Stephenson, K. (Internal Communication, no. 36) What Knowledge Tears Apart, Networks Make Whole. Retrieved December 10, 2004 from <http://www.netform.com/html/icf.pdf>
- Vaill, P. B. (1996). *Learning as a Way of Being*. San Francisco, CA, Jossey-Blass Inc.
- Walsham, G. (2005). Learning about being critical. *Information Systems Journal*, 15(2): 111-117.
- Webb, H.W., Gill, G. & Poe, G. (2005). Teaching with the case method online: pure versus hybrid approaches. *Decision Sciences Journal of Innovative Education*, 3(2): 223–250.