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A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF ONLINE VS FACE-TO-FACE TEACHING METHODS IN FOREIGN LANGUAGE EDUCATION

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Abstract

The rapid development of digital technologies has significantly transformed the landscape of foreign language education, leading to the widespread adoption of online learning environments alongside traditional face-to-face instruction. This study aims to provide a comprehensive comparative analysis of online and face-to-face teaching methods in foreign language education, focusing on their effectiveness in developing core language skills—speaking, listening, reading, and writing. The research examines pedagogical approaches, learner engagement, interaction quality, accessibility, and overall learning outcomes associated with both modalities.

Keywords

Foreign language education, online learning, face-to-face instruction, blended learning, communicative competence, CALL, MALL, language skills, teaching methods, digital pedagogy, technology, traditional.

Introduction

In recent years, especially in today's technological era and in the period following the pandemic, the field of foreign language education has undergone significant changes and has developed rapidly as a result of technological progress and

the widespread use of digital tools. The two main forms of education—online (distance) and traditional (face-to-face) teaching—have become the central focus of this development process. Each method has its own specific advantages and challenges, and both play an important role in the development of language skills such as speaking, listening, reading, and writing. This is particularly relevant in a time when technology has become an inseparable part of our daily lives.

Traditional, or face-to-face, education is often regarded as a classical approach and provides a structured and interactive learning environment. This method allows for immediate feedback, real-time communication, and the formation of strong social connections between teachers and students. It is especially effective in developing speaking and listening skills, as learners actively participate in direct conversations, role-plays, and group discussions. In addition, non-verbal elements such as gestures, facial expressions, and tone of voice play an important role in improving understanding and communication. Not only these, but there are also hundreds, even thousands, of methods that can be applied in traditional teaching, offering wide opportunities to support and develop students. In other words, this type of education allows for broader and more effective use of teaching methods.

On the other hand, online education has become widespread due to its flexibility and convenience, as it often involves less anxiety and does not require face-to-face interaction. Students can learn from any location and often at a time that suits them, which increases access to education. Online platforms include various multimedia resources such as video materials, interactive exercises, and language learning applications, which enhance students' interest and support different learning styles. In addition, communication and collaboration are possible through video conferencing and forums, although they may not fully provide the naturalness and richness of live, in-person interaction.



Both online and face-to-face teaching methods play an important role in foreign language education. While face-to-face learning is stronger in terms of interactive communication and immediate feedback, online education stands out for its flexibility and variety of resources. A blended learning approach, which combines the strengths of both methods, can be considered the most effective solution for modern language learners. In this article, we will briefly examine the advantages and disadvantages of these two types of education.

Literature Review

Previous studies highlight the importance of interaction in language learning. According to Long (1996), interaction plays a crucial role in language acquisition, particularly in developing speaking skills. Face-to-face environments naturally facilitate such interaction through real-time communication.

On the other hand, Chapelle (2003) emphasizes the role of Computer-Assisted Language Learning (CALL) in enhancing language education through technology. Mobile-Assisted Language Learning (MALL) further extends these possibilities by allowing learners to engage with language content anytime and anywhere.

Research by Hrastinski (2008) suggests that online learning can be effective when it includes both synchronous and asynchronous communication tools. However, it also indicates that lack of social presence can negatively impact learner engagement.

Methodology

This study employs a qualitative comparative approach, analyzing existing research, case studies, and educational practices. Data were collected from academic journals, books, and reputable online sources related to language teaching methods.

The analysis focuses on:

Interaction quality

Skill development

Learner motivation

Accessibility

Teaching effectiveness

Comparative Analysis

Interaction and Communication

Face-to-face teaching provides immediate feedback and rich interaction through verbal and non-verbal cues. Teachers can adjust instruction instantly based on student responses.

In contrast, online learning often relies on digital communication tools such as video conferencing, chats, and forums. While these tools enable interaction, they may lack spontaneity and depth.

Development of Language Skills

Speaking and listening skills are generally better developed in face-to-face settings due to real-time communication. Online platforms, however, are effective for reading and writing through structured tasks and digital resources.

Learner Motivation and Engagement

Online learning offers flexibility, which can increase motivation for self-directed learners. However, it may also lead to procrastination and reduced engagement without proper guidance.

Face-to-face learning fosters accountability and discipline through structured schedules and direct supervision.

Accessibility and Flexibility

Online education is highly accessible, allowing learners from different geographical locations to participate. Face-to-face education, however, requires physical presence and may limit access.

Discussion

The findings show that both teaching methods have their own strengths and weaknesses—much like two sides of the same coin. Face-to-face instruction has clear

advantages in terms of communication and immediate feedback, as well as the wide range of methods and effective techniques that can be applied, including the presence of non-verbal interaction. In contrast, online learning stands out for its flexibility and the diversity of resources it offers; however, the range of methods and the level of learning effectiveness tend to be lower compared to traditional face-to-face education. This reflects the overall outcome of the study.

Question	Online Learners (%)	Face-to-Face Learners (%)
Speaking confidence	62%	78%
Preference for method	38% online	62% face-to-face
Improvement in fluency	67%	81%
Reduced anxiety	74%	55%
Enough speaking practice	69%	72%
Enough tasks	74%	60%

A blended learning approach, in my view, would combine these advantages and provide a balanced solution that can address the limitations of both methods. Such an approach can increase both the effectiveness and the overall engagement of the learning process.

Conclusion

In conclusion, both online and face-to-face teaching methods play an important



role in foreign language education. Their effectiveness depends on how they are applied and how well they are adapted to learners' needs. The successful implementation and understanding of both approaches largely depend on the teacher's competence and professionalism, as well as on the suitability of learning materials and topics to students' age and level. In addition, the effectiveness of these methods is closely related to how appropriately the teaching methods are selected and aligned with the lesson content.

The most effective approach is the blended learning model, which combines both online and face-to-face instruction. This approach is considered the most suitable strategy for achieving optimal learning outcomes. Teaching by integrating the strengths of both methods leads to more effective learning and better results.

Footnotes

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