

Paradigm Shift: ESL Undergraduates' Experience in the Usage of Resources During the Pandemic

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ABSTRACT

Information and Communication Technology (ICT) has evolved significantly over the past few years and has been a key deciding factor for the effectiveness of the global education system. For Sri Lanka, the education system has been evolving with the advancements in ICT since the 1980s, following the launch of the distance learning mode introduced by the Open University. However, the arrival of COVID-19 challenged the prevalent face-to-face teaching since remote learning had not been the common type practiced in many local tertiary-level institutes. The main requirement for online teaching has been resources and their practical use for online learning. Thus, the present study compares the firsthand experience of 225 undergraduates representing the state and nonstate sectors, concerning resources and their overall impact on their English language learning. The data was gathered via an online questionnaire and analyzed using the SPSS statistical software. Once analyzed, the findings of the study imply that most of the undergraduates of both universities have been exposed to several resources when learning English online, causing their stimulation and development of their language competency, mainly in reading and writing, along with grammar and vocabulary. However, it is statistically evident that this academic satisfaction is negatively affected due to specific difficulties, concerning network connection, inadequate training, minimal exposure to LMS, and one video conferencing platform, and most importantly, poor attention paid to developing the learners' speaking skills via the available resources.

Keywords: Paradigm; ESL; Undergraduates; Resources; Pandemic

INTRODUCTION

As the “global lingua franca”, English has been the official language used in many institutional domains (Crystal, 2012), though it is not the majority's mother tongue (Navaz, 2021). Having this as the background, in 2020, only half of the GCE AL candidates passed the General English language examination (Navaz, 2021); only 25% obtained a pass. Unfortunately, this population comprises undergraduates who learn English as a Second Language (ESL) online for the first time due to the pandemic.

Teaching English as a Second Language (TESL) in local universities, initiated in the 1960s, has been taught as a core module for first-year undergraduates, irrespective of their degree programs. According to the Subject Benchmark Statement published by the Quality Assurance and Accreditation Council of the University Grants Commission (UGC), Sri Lanka, the first aim of teaching English is to develop undergraduates' competency in communication along with clarity and coherence (Quality Assurance Council, 2010). This aim is challenged when the outbreak of COVID-19 makes the local government replace the physical delivery of education with online delivery to curb the spread of the disease. Subsequently, all interactions start to occur online, and there are various perspectives on the effectiveness of e-learning in English.

This complexity in determining the effectiveness of learning English online is due to economic and social factors, going beyond the pedagogical concern, such as the availability and access to resources and the context of teaching and learning English. Thus, it is necessary to examine whether the relevant resources are available, with

constant connection, and in the context of teaching and learning English online, which affects learners' overall ability and perspective.

In the post-pandemic period, many higher educational institutions practice a hybrid education system (Simonova et al, 2023) in addition to all external degree programs offering English language to undergraduates. Thus, the present study widens the prevailing literature on distant learning of the English language, emphasizing the accessibility to resources, awareness of their usage, and facilitation towards the development of receptive and productive skills in English.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The forum on Higher Education for Sustainable Development held in July 2024, urges the necessity of addressing the technological division in education to make learning available to all students, especially in developing countries, so that the process of education and its development would not be affected negatively in a time of global crisis such as COVID-19 (United Nations, 2024).

The necessity of resources for online learning is further highlighted in White's Collaborative Control theory, and according to that, the incorporation of resources into online teaching and learning enhances learner autonomy in mastering the course content.

Accessibility of Resources

Access to resources assists learner autonomy and eases the emotional and communicative differences in distance learning (Moore, 2013), which is underscored in the Transactional Distance Learning Theory. Moreover, Galagedara and Indrasena (2023) highlight that inadequate availability of technological devices demotivates students to learn online.

Unfortunately, in Sri Lanka, the number of households owning either a desktop or a laptop is only 19.5% by 2024, while in 2021, at the onset of the pandemic, it was just 22.9% (Department of Census and Statistics, 2024). Notably, there has been a slight decrease in households that own a desktop or laptop. Furthermore, the number of households with Internet access increased slightly from 44.5 % to 53.6%, from 2021 to 2024 (Department of Census and Statistics, 2024). However, it is still half of the households in Sri Lanka.

It is identified that limited access to devices and the Internet hinders effective online learning (Priyadarshani & Jesuiya, 2021). For instance, the Learning Management System (LMS), a key communication platform (Rashida, 2018), could not be adequately used due to the poor availability of devices and the Internet. Not having consistent Internet becomes the primary obstacle learners face during the pandemic, and according to Villegas & Garcia (2022), the LMS, which is mainly designed for distant learning collaboration, is not enhanced to be accessed via smartphone devices. Further to LMS, teaching English online incorporates several other resources and platforms, both synchronously and asynchronously. All these platforms require a device as well as an Internet connection.

Awareness of The Usage of Resources for Learning English Online

Though online learning is a feasible approach for tertiary level and has a positive influence towards the academic success of undergraduates (Weerathna et al.,2023), especially during crisis, there is a necessity of providing proper digital infrastructure to undergraduates for their online learning and training on the use of the given resources (Subashini et al., 2022), which enhances their overall academic satisfaction. Moreover, it is highlighted that knowing how to use resources effectively helps learners become optimistic about their online learning experience (U.G.T.T. & W.D.N., 2021).

Furthermore, inadequate knowledge and self-confidence in utilizing technological resources demotivate online learners, resulting in absenteeism for online classes (Riyath et al, 2022; Hettiarachchi et al., 2021).

According to Bandara (2024), awareness is knowing or being well-versed about anything. When comparing online and physical learning, most undergraduates are primarily aware of physical learning approaches (Dilmi

Shalika et al., 2023). However, it is noted that the computer literacy rate of the Sri Lankan youth aged between 20 and 24 years old is 70.8%, though during the prevalence of the pandemic, the literacy rate is 67.9% (Department of Census and Statistics, 2024). Thus, it has to be examined whether this literacy on Information Technology (IT) assists in effective online learning of English.

In addition, awareness of utilizing resources ethically is also essential, as academic integrity is a key concern in every university guideline, which most undergraduates do not follow due to their lack of awareness (Bandara & Ellepola, 2019). An online course should consist of an orientation, an LMS, an e-library, and convenient platforms to conduct online assignments and provide feedback (Gunawardhana, 2020). Along with these elements, it is recommended that short courses or training be conducted online for undergraduates and lecturers, which can be scrutinized and guided by the University Grant Commission (Gunawardhana, 2020). The necessity of conducting training on resources used for the online education system for undergraduates and lecturers is further emphasized by Nafrees et al. (2020). However, none of these studies have examined the awareness and training provided on using the resources required when learning English.

According to Subedi (2021), various digital resources are available for English lecturers to utilize in online teaching, including Kahoot, Quizziz, Padlet, TED talks, and Cambridge Assessment English. These resources facilitate interaction, collaboration, and stimulation in learning English online. However, many studies have not studied undergraduates' awareness of the said resources, which have examined only the use of resources in online learning in general.

Development of Productive and Receptive Skills of The English Language

According to the theories of Communicative Language Teaching, Second Language Acquisition, Interaction Hypothesis, and Comprehensible Output Hypothesis, teaching and learning English as a Second Language require communication between students and teachers, which inspires convenient language usage, incorporating both the knowledge and practice gained (Throssell et al, 2015; Long, 1981; Krashen, 1989; Swain, 1995)

Cambridge Dictionary defines 'usage' as how something is used or treated (2022). It is identified that using resources for online teaching develops overall academic skills (Nyagorme et al., 2017), mainly comprising competency in reading, listening, writing, and speaking. The necessity of enhancing these skills through distance learning at the tertiary level, both for academics and non-academics, is emphasized by Shahid et al. (2023). However, there are significant challenges (Subekti, 2021).

Swain's Output Hypothesis (1985, 2000) suggests that productive language learning needs coherent input and output. Further, a study conducted with Malaysian undergraduates found that online learning stimulates them to communicate confidently and comprehend the lessons without a hassle (Jack Richards, 2015). Moreover, one of the most appropriate methods for acquiring and enhancing receptive skills promptly is to utilize the auditory and visual resources of the texts that are used in the class; consequently, learners comprehend the text better when they visualize and hear the pronunciation simultaneously (Harits Masduqi et al., 2023; Tuncer & Karataş, 2022), and according to the Turkish undergraduates, reading skills are more developed when they do the activities in groups during the online teaching of English (Tuncer & Karataş, 2022).

On the other hand, undergraduates expect to have diverse topics and activities and feedback for their attempts to develop writing, listening, and speaking skills in online ELT. English (Tuncer & Karataş, 2022). Notably, undergraduates expect more listening and speaking online practice activities (Tuncer & Karataş, 2022). Some resources, such as YouTube videos and other digital resources, can facilitate speaking and writing skills (Harits Masduqi et al., 2023).

Conceptual Framework

When evaluating the literature, it is identified that less local research examines the overall effect of resources on state and nonstate sector undergraduates. However, it is noted that the existing literature mainly revolves around three variables: availability and access, awareness, and use of the resources in developing receptive and productive skills when learning English online. The following conceptual framework represents how each

variable relates to the other. Availability, access, and awareness of resources are taken as independent variables that affect the dependent variable: the overall use of resources for the development of productive and receptive skills in English.

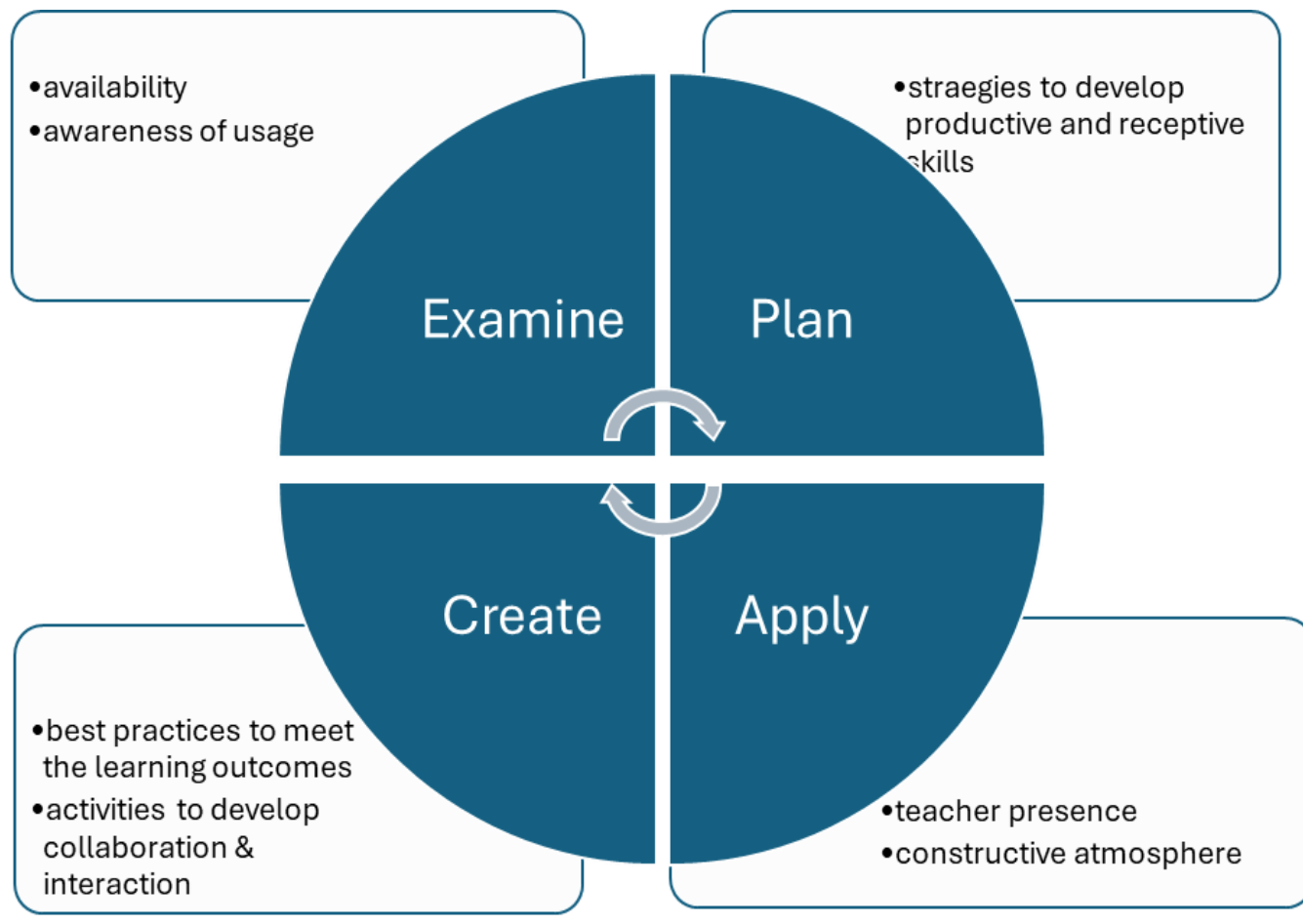


Figure 01: Conceptual Framework for the Effective Use of Resources for Teaching English Online

The following hypotheses, which are based on the above conceptual framework, are tested in this study:

H₁: There is no difference in the distribution of possessing a device for accessing online English learning between the government and private undergraduates.

H₂: There is no significant association between the type of device used for accessing online English learning and experiencing technical issues, and between the government and private undergraduates.

H₃: There is no significant relationship between the government and private undergraduates in network coverage/capacity/speed distribution in one's residential area.

H₄: There is no significant relationship in experiencing technical difficulties from the device used when accessing online English learning between the government and private undergraduates.

H₅: There is no significant relationship between the government and private undergraduates in using LMS for learning English online.

H₆: There is no significant relationship in having access to the university e-library between the government and private undergraduates

H₇: There is no significant relationship between the government and private undergraduates when learning English online, using other online collaborative tools, excluding LMS.

H₈: There is no significant relationship in using Microsoft PowerPoint, YouTube, social media, Email, MS Word/Excel/PDF, online dictionary, using Bulletin Boards, online quizzes, podcasts, grammar, and vocabulary competence for online English language skill development between the government and private undergraduates

H₉: There is no significant relationship in the stimulation received by the resources used during online English teaching between the government and private undergraduates

H₁₀: No significant relationship exists between the number of hours spent online ELT synchronously or asynchronously and the stimulation from resources used during online English teaching.

H₁₁: There is no significant relationship in the video conferencing platform used for online English language teaching between the government and private undergraduates

H₁₂: There is no significant relationship between any technical issues experienced with the video conferencing platform used for online English language teaching.

H₁₃: There is no significant relationship between government and private undergraduates undergoing training for online learning in general or English.

METHODOLOGY

Sampling

The study sample consisted of 225 undergraduates affiliated with the Faculty of Engineering, representing two local universities in state and nonstate sectors. The selection of the two representations is primarily due to the diverse social and economic backgrounds, which are said to be prevalent in Sri Lankan universities (Daily FT, 2020), which, if negative, affect their education (Tomaszewski et al., 2022). Thus, the present study compares two universities representing the two sectors, where students have followed similar content in their online English course taught during the pandemic.

Data Collection Tool

Data from the said sample was gathered via an online questionnaire, which had 15 closed-ended questions examining the availability, access, awareness, and impact on developing the English language skills of the undergraduates. According to Gilham (2000) and Brown (2001), incorporating an online questionnaire makes the data more representative and precise, and due to the anonymity maintained, research participants are not hesitant to share their thoughts with the researcher (Gillham, 2000; Brown, 2001). Moreover, being able to email the questionnaire is a key benefit since it makes data collection flexible (Evans & Mathur, 2005).

Data Analysis

The data was analyzed via the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) and presented via figures and tables. Since all the data were categorical, the analysis mainly examined whether the variables had a statistical relationship with the type of state and nonstate learning context.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Availability and Access to Resources

One of the key requirements for an e-learner is the availability of a device with an Internet connection, which also supports the learner's independence and bridges the emotional and communicative gaps in distance learning (Moore, 2013). When analyzing this with the present sample of learners following the English course, it is evident from the chi-square analysis that regardless of the university type, almost all undergraduates have had access to a device, whether it is a personal or not ($\chi^2(df = 2, N=225) = 1.944, p = 0.378$). This is further illustrated in the statistical summary given in Table 01.

Table 1: A Device to Access Online ESL

			Device_to_Access			Total
			Yes	No	Not my device	
Group	Pvt_Uni	Count	138	3	3	144
		Expected Count	139.5	1.9	2.6	144.0
		% within Group	95.8%	2.1%	2.1%	100.0%
	Gvt_Uni	Count	80	0	1	81
		Expected Count	78.5	1.1	1.4	81.0
		% within Group	98.8%	0.0%	1.2%	100.0%
Total		Count	218	3	4	225
		Expected Count	218.0	3.0	4.0	225.0
		% within Group	96.9%	1.3%	1.8%	100.0%

Furthermore, the type of university and the device used stand as independent variables without having any relationship as depicted in the chi-square analysis ($\chi^2(df = 3, N=223) = 4.943, p = 0.176$). Thus, as demonstrated in Table 2, it is identified that the majority of the research participants have been using laptops to learn English online. However, according to the study conducted by Champa (2024), undergraduates (78.9%) used smartphones for online education.

Table 2: Device Type to Access Online ESL

			Device_Name				Total
			Desktop	Laptop	Smartphone	Tab	
Group	Pvt_Uni	Count	8	125	10	1	144
		Expected Count	6.5	122.0	14.2	1.3	144.0
		% within Group	5.6%	86.8%	6.9%	0.7%	100.0%
	Gvt_Uni	Count	2	64	12	1	79
		Expected Count	3.5	67.0	7.8	.7	79.0
		% within Group	2.5%	81.0%	15.2%	1.3%	100.0%
Total		Count	10	189	22	2	223
		Expected Count	10.0	189.0	22.0	2.0	223.0
		% within Group	4.5%	84.8%	9.9%	0.9%	100.0%

It is undeniable that online learning primarily requires Internet coverage, and as per the evidence gathered, most undergraduates representing both universities have responded positively, as further illustrated in Table 3.

Table 3: Having Internet Access

			Access_to_Internet		Total
			Yes	No	
Group	Pvt_Uni	Count	138	4	142
		Expected Count	138.2	3.8	142.0
		% within Group	97.2%	2.8%	100.0%
	Gvt_Uni	Count	78	2	80
		Expected Count	77.8	2.2	80.0
		% within Group	97.5%	2.5%	100.0%
Total	Count	216	6	222	
	Expected Count	216.0	6.0	222.0	
	% within Group	97.3%	2.7%	100.0%	

When the chi-square analysis is done to examine whether there is a statistical significance between the university type and the students' experience with the Internet coverage, it is revealed that there has been a notable difference between the responses received from the government and private sector undergraduates ($\chi^2(df = 1, N=224) = 28.648, p = .000$).

Table 4: Statistical Relationship between the Network Coverage and the Type of University

	Value	Df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)	Exact Sig. (2-sided)	Exact Sig. (1-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	28.648 ^a	1	.000		
Continuity Correction ^b	27.171	1	.000		
Likelihood Ratio	29.933	1	.000		
Fisher's Exact Test				.000	.000
Linear-by-Linear Association	28.520	1	.000		
N of Valid Cases	224				

Upon further examination, the statistics of Table 5 reveal that more than half of government university students have experienced issues with their network coverage while learning English online, in contrast to their private university counterparts.

Table 5: Network Coverage Issues to Access Online ELT

			Network_Issue_Residential_Area		Total
			Yes	No	
Group	Pvt_Uni	Count	58	86	144
		Expected Count	77.1	66.9	144.0
		% within Group	40.3%	59.7%	100.0%
	Gvt_Uni	Count	62	18	80
		Expected Count	42.9	37.1	80.0
		% within Group	77.5%	22.5%	100.0%
Total		Count	120	104	224
		Expected Count	120.0	104.0	224.0
		% within Group	53.6%	46.4%	100.0%

When examining whether these research participants have experienced any other technical difficulties and the statistical relationship of that experience with the university type, the chi-square analysis revealed that there is no statistical significance ($\chi^2(df = 1, N=228) = .620, p = .628$). Rather, as depicted in Table 6, a majority of undergraduates in both universities have had technical difficulties when learning English online; this finding is similar to Champa’s (2024) study as well, according to which, having technical issues is a key hindrance for online learning at the tertiary level in general.

Table 6: Experiencing Technical Difficulties When Learning English Online

			Facing_Technical_Difficulties		Total
			Yes	No	
Group	Pvt_Uni	Count	55	89	144
		Expected Count	51.4	92.6	144.0
		% within Group	38.2%	61.8%	100.0%
	Gvt_Uni	Count	25	55	80
		Expected Count	28.6	51.4	80.0
		% within Group	31.3%	68.8%	100.0%
Total		Count	80	144	224
		Expected Count	80.0	144.0	224.0
		% within Group	35.7%	64.3%	100.0%

Awareness in Using the Resources for Learning English Online

Almost all institutes incorporate email and their institutional Learning Management Systems (LMS) as key supplementary tools in face-to-face learning (Gunawardhana, L. K. P. D.,2020); in fact, LMS is utilized not only as the official communicative platform for sharing academic-related materials but also as an exam platform. When the present study examines the participants’ experience with said tools when teaching and learning English online during COVID-19, the chi-sqaure analysis, as given in Table 7 and Table 8, reveals that the use of LMS and the e-library have statistically significant relationships with the university type ($\chi^2(df = 1, N=221) = 32.514, p = .000$) and ($\chi^2(df = 1, N=218) = 5.977, p = .017$) respectively.

Table 7: The Use of LMS and the University Type

	Value	Df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)	Exact Sig. (2-sided)	Exact Sig. (1-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	32.514 ^a	1	.000		
Continuity Correction ^b	30.789	1	.000		
Likelihood Ratio	38.187	1	.000		
Fisher's Exact Test				.000	.000
Linear-by-Linear Association	32.367	1	.000		
N of Valid Cases	221				

Table 8: The Use of the E-library and the University Type

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)	Exact Sig. (2-sided)	Exact Sig. (1-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	5.977 ^a	1	.014		
Continuity Correction ^b	5.271	1	.022		
Likelihood Ratio	5.898	1	.015		
Fisher's Exact Test				.017	.011
Linear-by-Linear Association	5.950	1	.015		
N of Valid Cases	218				

However, the statistical summaries illustrated in Tables 9 and 10 reveal a noteworthy difference in the use of the LMS and e-library for online ESL between the two universities. According to Table 9, unlike government university students, a majority of private sector undergraduates have not used LMS during learning English online, whereas the opposite has occurred with the use of the e-library. According to Table 10, a significant number of government undergraduates have not experienced the use of the e-library for accessing English Language resources during the pandemic, compared to the private university students. According to Sonanda Thero (2023), using the e-library at the tertiary level is much like gaining a thorough knowledge from an e-repository that allows learners to conveniently refer to all recommended texts, UpToDate.

Table 9: Statistical Summary of the Use of LMS during Online ESL

			LMS_Usage_		Total
			Yes	No	
Group	Pvt_Uni	Count	81	61	142
		Expected Count	99.6	42.4	142.0
		% within Group	57.0%	43.0%	100.0%
	Gvt_Uni	Count	74	5	79
		Expected Count	55.4	23.6	79.0
		% within Group	93.7%	6.3%	100.0%
Total		Count	155	66	221
		Expected Count	155.0	66.0	221.0
		% within Group	70.1%	29.9%	100.0%

Table 10: Statistical Summary of the Use of the E-library during Online ESL

			Instruction_Use_UniELibrary_Accessing _ELMaterials		Total
			Yes	No	
Group	Pvt_Uni	Count	100	38	138
		Expected Count	91.8	46.2	138.0
		% within Group	72.5%	27.5%	100.0%
	Gvt_Uni	Count	45	35	80
		Expected Count	53.2	26.8	80.0
		% within Group	56.3%	43.8%	100.0%
Total		Count	145	73	218
		Expected Count	145.0	73.0	218.0
		% within Group	66.5%	33.5%	100.0%

Effect of Resources on the Development of Productive and Receptive Skills in English

Apart from the LMS and the e-library, there are many other resources, such as MS Office applications, social media, YouTube, online quizzes, podcasts, bulletin boards, email, and online dictionaries, which can be used for developing English language skills online. It is emphasized that the technological resources mentioned can be used to optimize teaching productive and receptive skills in the English Language (Harits Masduqi et al., 2023). When the evidence gathered for the present study is analysed to see whether there is a significant relationship

between the mentioned resources with the university type, the chi-square analysis, which is presented in Tables 11,12, reveals that there is a significant relationship between the use of podcasts and bulletin boards with the type of university.

Table 11: Statistical Relationship of Using Podcasts for Online ESL and the University Type

	Value	Df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	5.714 ^a	3	.126
Likelihood Ratio	6.261	3	.100
Linear-by-Linear Association	4.828	1	.028
N of Valid Cases	136		

Table 12: Statistical Relationship of Using Bulletin Boards for Online ESL and the University Type

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	5.602 ^a	3	.133
Likelihood Ratio	5.512	3	.138
Linear-by-Linear Association	4.473	1	.034
N of Valid Cases	159		

When analysing the use of bulletin boards further, as illustrated in Table 13, it becomes evident that these bulletin boards have been mainly used to develop the private university students' English language reading and writing skills, whereas for government university Engineering undergraduates, bulletin boards have been mostly used to develop their writing skills online.

With regard to the use of podcasts, as given in Table 14, unlike the Engineering undergraduates at the government university, most at the private university have been able to develop their listening skills during their online English course. However, they are not used much at government universities.

With regard to the use of podcasts, as given in Table 14, unlike the undergraduates at the government university, whose English language lecturers have not used podcasts for teaching English online, many in the private university have been able to develop their listening skills during their online English course.

Table 13: Use of Bulletin Boards for Online ESL

			BulletinBoards_Mostly_Used_For				Total
			Reading	Writing	Listening	Speaking	
Group	Pvt_Uni	Count	30	60	6	2	98
		Expected Count	27.1	59.2	6.8	4.9	98.0
		% within Group	30.6%	61.2%	6.1%	2.0%	100.0%
	Gvt_Uni	Count	14	36	5	6	61
		Expected Count	16.9	36.8	4.2	3.1	61.0

		% within Group	23.0%	59.0%	8.2%	9.8%	100.0%
Total	Count		44	96	11	8	159
	Expected Count		44.0	96.0	11.0	8.0	159.0
	% within Group		27.7%	60.4%	6.9%	5.0%	100.0%

Table 14: Usage of Podcasts for Online ESL

			Podcasts_Mostly_Used_For				Total
			1	2	3	4	
Group	Pvt_Uni	Count	16	10	50	14	90
		Expected Count	12.6	7.9	53.6	15.9	90.0
		% within Group	17.8%	11.1%	55.6%	15.6%	100.0%
Gvt_Uni	Count	3	2	31	10	46	
	Expected Count	6.4	4.1	27.4	8.1	46.0	
	% within Group	6.5%	4.3%	67.4%	21.7%	100.0%	
Total	Count	19	12	81	24	136	
	Expected Count	19.0	12.0	81.0	24.0	136.0	
	% within Group	14.0%	8.8%	59.6%	17.6%	100.0%	

In addition to these two resources, as demonstrated in Pivot Tables 15 and 16, the use of other resources for online ESL for undergraduates in both universities has been primarily used to develop reading, writing, and listening skills. Receptive skills, such as reading, have been developed mostly via Microsoft PowerPoint and online dictionaries in both universities, while listening skills have been mainly developed via YouTube videos. The significant fact is that none of these resources has been used to develop the speaking skills of these undergraduates. According to Budiarta & Krismayani (2024), social media is a resource which bolsters the speaking skills of online learners, though they have not specified English language speaking.

Table 15: Pivot Table for the Use of Resources for Developing Online ESL Skills at the Private University

	Column Labels	Listening	Reading	Speaking	Writing (blank)	Grand Total
Count of MicrosoftPowerPoint		8	83	14	22	127
Count of SocialMediaWhatsappFacebooketc		15	43	9	30	97
Count of Youtube		90	20	8	11	129
Count of Email		3	32	2	65	102
Count of MicrosoftOfficeWordsExcelsPDFsetc		5	41	1	73	120
Count of OnlineDictionary		5	63	5	32	105
Count of OnlineQuizzes		17	25	16	43	101

Table 16: Use of Resources for Developing Productive and Receptive Skills in Online ESL at the Government University

	Column Labels					Grand Total
	Listening	Reading	Speaking	Writing	(blank)	
Count of MicrosoftPowerPoint	3	39	10	18		70
Count of Youtube	54	3	3	5		65
Count of SocialMediaWhatsappFacebooketc	7	22	7	14		50
Count of Email	2	15	1	37		55
Count of MicrosoftOfficeWordsExcelsPDFsetc	1	24	2	42		69
Count of OnlineDictionary	3	28	5	16		52
Count of OnlineOuizzes	15	11	7	20		53

Further to these skills, accurate use of grammar and vocabulary in the English language is essential to be taught. Since grammar is occasionally viewed as an obstacle to successful communication, integrating ‘contextualized grammar’ with well-defined goals and a sound vocabulary is critical for the enhancement of English language proficiency (Saengboon et al., 2022; Somathasan, 2021). As explained in Figures 2 and 3, the majority of research participants have been taught to develop their grammar and vocabulary in the English language, incorporating the online resources. However, it is also significant to note that there have been some research participants in both universities, whose vocabulary development using these resources has not occurred in comparison to grammar.

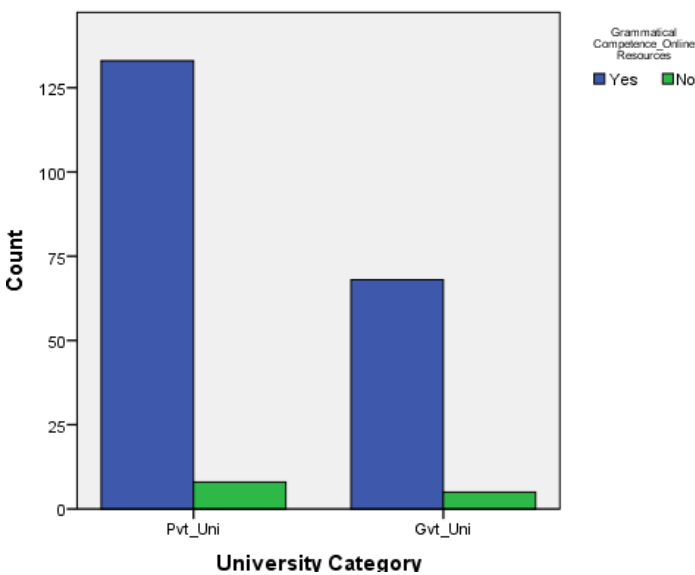


Figure 2: Development of Grammar via Resources

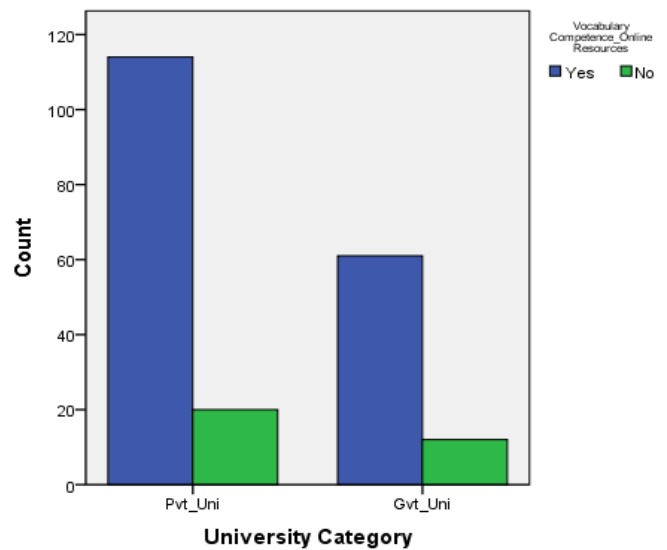


Figure 3: Development of Vocabulary via Resources

The ability to access and use digital learning resources has been shown to encourage both teachers and students to make use of these tools (Scott et al., 2017; Henderson et al., 2017) to support online English language acquisition and encourage the learning process (Dilahara et al., 2021).

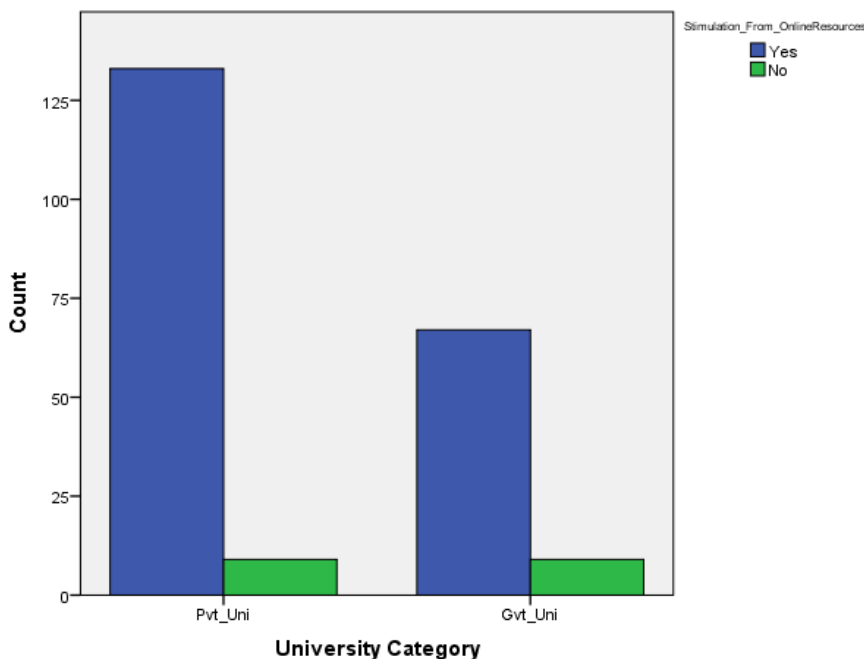


Figure 4: Stimulation Received from Resources in Online English Language Learning

Thus, as illustrated in Figure 4, it can be stated that the use of resources online has stimulated most of the undergraduates to learn English synchronously as well as asynchronously, irrespective of the type of university. However, another chi-square analysis revealed that there is no significant relationship between the number of hours spent on synchronous or asynchronous ESL learning with the stimulation received from the resources ($\chi^2(df = 3, N=217)=.662, p = .712$).

Furthermore, Ariyasinghe (2022) emphasized that the video conferencing platform plays a vital role in online ESL teaching in the secondary education system. However, the present study examines the applicability of the said resource at the tertiary level and as evidence of the chi-square analysis depicted in Table 17, it can be concluded that there is a significant relationship on the use of the video platform for teaching English online and the university category ($\chi^2(df = 2, N=222)=7.296, p = .009$).

Table 17: Statistical Relationship Between the Video Platform Used to Teach ESL Online and the University Type

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	7.296 ^a	2	.026
Likelihood Ratio	9.543	2	.008
Linear-by-Linear Association	6.908	1	.009
N of Valid Cases	222		

When examining the statistical summary further, as given in Table 18, the cause for the said significant relationship is identified as the reliance on the Zoom platform for teaching ESL at the government university, unlike the private university, where students have been taught the ESL module via MS Teams and Google Meet as well, in addition to Zoom.

Table 18: Type of Video Conferencing Platform Used

			Video Conferencing Platform Used by the Lecturer			Total
			Zoom	Microsoft Teams	Google Meet	
Group	Pvt_Uni	Count	126	14	2	142
		Expected Count	131.1	9.6	1.3	142.0
		% within Group	88.7%	9.9%	1.4%	100.0%
	Gvt_Uni	Count	79	1	0	80
		Expected Count	73.9	5.4	.7	80.0
		% within Group	98.8%	1.3%	0.0%	100.0%
Total		Count	205	15	2	222
		Expected Count	205.0	15.0	2.0	222.0
		% within Group	92.3%	6.8%	0.9%	100.0%

Nevertheless, it is also identified that there is no statistical correlation between the occurrence of any technical issues and the video conferencing platform utilized for teaching English online to both government and private undergraduates ($\chi^2(df = 2, N=222) = 1.162, p = .427$).

Collaborative Learning vs Resources Used for Teaching English Online

In terms of face-to-face English learning, it is said that the collaboration among learners enhances their motivation, decreases anxiety, and encourages peer communication, which are vital for an effective ‘communicative teaching’ (Udara, 2021). However, as illustrated in Table 19, the majority of the research participants, irrespective of their university, have mentioned that no such online collaborative platforms, except the LMS, have been employed during the online ESL course.

Table 19: Usage of Online Collaborative Platforms to Teach English Online in the Two Universities

			Using Different Online Platform for collaboration		Total
			Yes	No	
Group	Pvt_Uni	Count	41	101	142
		Expected Count	41.1	100.9	142.0
		% within Group	28.9%	71.1%	100.0%
	Gvt_Uni	Count	23	56	79
		Expected Count	22.9	56.1	79.0
		% within Group	29.1%	70.9%	100.0%

Total	Count	64	157	221
	Expected Count	64.0	157.0	221.0
	% within Group	29.0%	71.0%	100.0%

Achieving Learning Outcomes vs Resources Used for Teaching English Online

The main goal of using these resources is to make learners meet the Learning Outcomes (LO), whether it is synchronous or asynchronous, and according to Smith et al (2020), undergraduates have an optimistic opinion on accomplishing the LOs even during the COVID-19 pandemic (2020). To help learners maintain this optimistic view, it is essential to assist them in navigating the extensive online resources, enabling them to locate reliable information and quickly find what they need for their specific purposes (Krajcsó & Frimmel, 2017).

When the present study compares the two universities, it becomes clear that the LOs in both universities have similar expectations regarding English language skills in academic reading, listening, writing, delivering presentations, and technical writing. Overall, the evidence gathered and analysed statistically in Table 20 indicates that the majority of the research participants have not been trained to use ESL resources in reaching the said LOs online. However, it is also noted that approximately one-third of the government university students and a minority in the private university have undergone general training for online learning.

Table 20: Training Given on Familiarising with the Resources

			Training_Given_University			Total
			Yes	No	Yes, but they were training in learning online in general	
Group	Pvt_Uni	Count	25	86	29	140
		Expected Count	28.1	77.4	34.5	140.0
		% within Group	17.9%	61.4%	20.7%	100.0%
	Gvt_Uni	Count	19	35	25	79
		Expected Count	15.9	43.6	19.5	79.0
		% within Group	24.1%	44.3%	31.6%	100.0%
Total		Count	44	121	54	219
		Expected Count	44.0	121.0	54.0	219.0
		% within Group	20.1%	55.3%	24.7%	100.0%

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Overall, the data analysis reveals several key findings with regard to the hypotheses comparing private and public university students. To sum up, the chi-square analysis indicates that there is no significant relationship between several categorical variables and the university type: access to a device, the device type, experiencing technical issues, use of online collaborative tools, the use of Microsoft PowerPoint, YouTube, social media, email, MS Word/Excel/PDF, online dictionaries, online quizzes, the development of grammar and vocabulary through resources, and the stimulation received from both synchronous and asynchronous learning English language online, prevalence of technical issues with the video conferencing platform used and training

experienced concerning resources usage for online ESL or in general, thus, accepting H₁, H₂, H₄, H₇, H₉, H₁₀, H₁₂, and H₁₃.

On the contrary, the analysis further reveals that factors such as the network access, access to LMS, e-library, experience with bulletin boards and podcasts and the video conferencing platform chosen, have a significant relationship with the university; thus, leading to the rejection of hypotheses H₃, H₅, H₆, H₈, and H₁₁.

Examining

Among the range of factors that influence the use of resources for learning English online at the Sri Lankan universities, particularly from the perspective of both public and private sector undergraduates engaged in this learning approach during the pandemic, the study finds that the majority of the population has access to a device to access online ELT. Among them, many have had laptops. However, it is further identified that government university students in the selected sample have experienced network connectivity issues during the course of online ESL learning. This is further emphasized by Wijewardene (2021) and Randhuli (2020), when it is said that online lectures in general become challenging primarily due to the internet issues students face.

Moreover, the lecturer's presence via the video conferencing platform and the exposure given to the e-library and LMS reveal a considerable difference when comparing the two universities. Concerning the conferencing platform, the evidence shows that both Zoom, Microsoft Teams and even Google Meet have been used to teach English online in the private university, whereas government undergraduates have been taught English only via Zoom. Next, about the access provided to the e-library, it is noted that, unlike the private university students in the research sample, more than half of the government university students have not been exposed to the e-library facility, whereas the said private undergraduates have not been much exposed to the LMS.

Planning

Toyoda and Harrison (2002) emphasize that technological challenges that occur during online teaching and learning can be overcome by planning the use of available resources, and according to the concept of Online Collaborative Learning (OCL), learners can collaborate and engage online when appropriate online tools and resources are available (Carver, 2012). One such requirement to plan a smooth delivery of online ELT is the university LMS, and as the current study's data analysis indicates, this resource has been less used in the private university context compared to the government university, thereby supporting hypothesis H₅. In addition to LMS, it is identified that no other collaborative tool has been available in both the universities accepting H₇ and

Application and Creation

In the current study, over 80% of participants indicated that they utilized online resources during English lectures at both universities. When analyzing the incorporation of each of these resources for developing the undergraduates' productive and receptive skills in the English language, it is clear that Microsoft PowerPoint, YouTube, social media, Email, MS Word/Excel/PDF, online dictionary have been used in both the universities while it is identified that there is a significant relationship between the use of bulletin boards and pod casts and the university type. Further analysis on this reveals that bulletin boards are used to develop both reading and writing in the English language at the private university, while they are only used for writing at the government university. With regard to podcasts have not been used much at the government university, whereas in the private university context, this resource has been used to develop listening skills.

In terms of other resources vs, the skill enhancement, it is noted that speaking skills in the English language have not been developed online through these resources. Notably, Ibrahim Mohamed (2021) similarly notes that speaking and listening skills are not effectively taught in online formats, suggesting these skills are better learned in face-to-face environments. However, in both universities, the majority of the participants' reading skills have been developed via Microsoft PPT and online dictionaries, while listening skills are mostly developed via YouTube.

The Community of Inquiry (CoI) theory emphasizes the necessity of having cognitive, social, and teaching presence in online education, thereby enhancing the learning experience and fostering collaboration between students and instructors (Garrison et al., 2000; Cole et al., 2019). In the local context, Herath (2022) argues that

it is essential to sustain students' motivation, engagement, and active participation, which promotes effective teaching. Additionally, Herath (2022) notes that John Keller, a psychologist specializing in education, proposed that Attention, Relevance, Confidence, Satisfaction (ARCS2) is an essential strategy for motivating learners. According to the analysis of the data, H⁹ and H¹⁰ are validated by evidence indicating that resources employed in both synchronous and asynchronous modalities during online English language teaching (ELT) provide stimulation. Indeed, the findings suggest that the resources utilized in online ELT have engaged and stimulated the learning process for most participants in the research.

Without collaboration, identifying Learning Outcomes (LOs) becomes challenging (Siemens, 2005; Harasim, 2012; Garrison et al., 2000), and in the context of online learning, fulfilling LOs can be particularly tough (Daily FT, 2020). However, the data analysis from this study shows that despite a minority of the sample, many research participants' vocabulary and grammar have been enhanced through the resources utilized.

Create

Moreover, the research investigated whether students received training to adapt to the resources used in the online delivery of the English language. Based on the chi-square analysis of the data, the findings support H₁₃, H₁₄, and H₁₅, where it becomes evident that the majority of the undergraduates in both universities have not undergone training, helping them to be familiar with the resources used for online English learning. Nevertheless, it is also noted that one-third of the government undergraduates in the sample have been trained in general for online learning, not specifically on the use of resources required for learning the English language online.

Exacerbating this finding, the literature review reveals a notable absence of adequate local research regarding the training provided to undergraduate students, while international studies indicate that students need proper preparation to effectively navigate online learning settings (Unal et al., 2014; Lin & Jou, 2013; Akaslan and Law, 2011; Toyoda & Harrison, 2002). The Community of Inquiry (CoI) framework suggests that training should focus on cognitive, social, and teaching presence in online education (Garrison et al., 2000). Most local research has predominantly examined the training available for lecturers, highlighting the need for further training due to their limited understanding of resource utilization, which negatively affects online teaching (Girakaduwa, 2019; Wijetunge and Sivasanthiran, 2020; Selvaras, 2020).

In conclusion, the conceptual model introduced earlier (Figure 1) can be revised as follows, with the key findings:

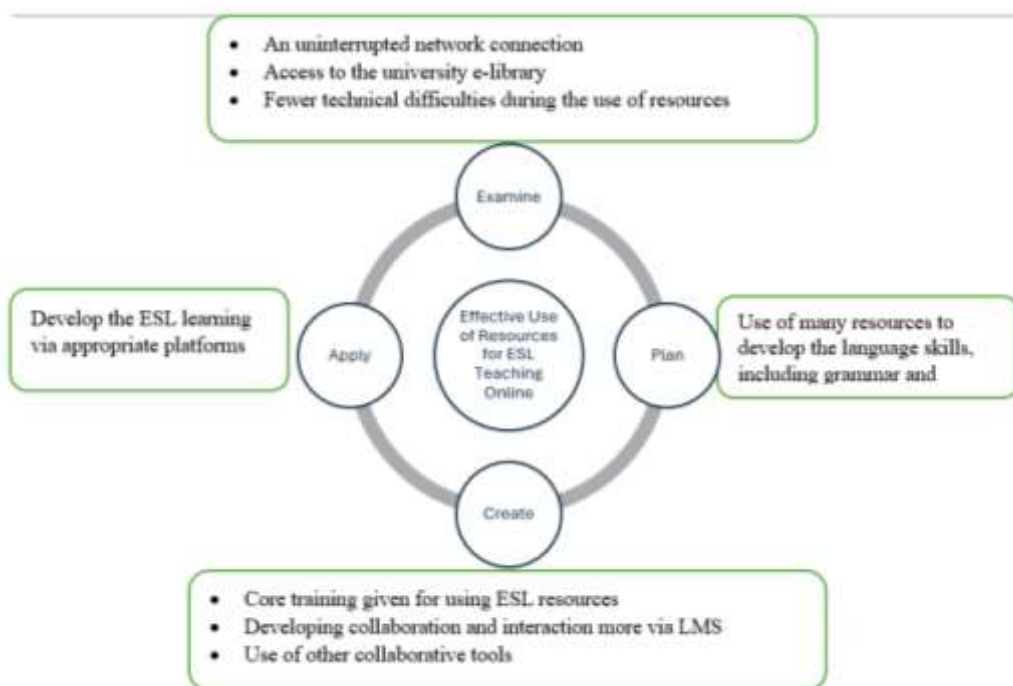


Figure 5: The revised model for effective use of resources for ESL online learning

Overall, the Figure 5 can be utilized as a framework to evaluate the effectiveness of resources employed for online English learning at the tertiary level, enabling comparisons with other English courses targeted at first-year undergraduates.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The research offers valuable insights into the essential factors influencing resource utilization for successful online English teaching and learning at both state and private universities. Given the scarcity of local studies in this area, this research addresses a significant gap by proposing a model intended for both learners and instructors within the targeted institutions.

In summary, several challenges need to be tackled concerning online English language education for the target population at both public and private universities in the selected faculties. These issues include network-related problems, having a Learning Management System (LMS), reliance on Zoom, and a lack of development in speaking skills via the available resources. When comparing the two universities, there is a lack of training provided to undergraduates in using resources for online English learning.

Additionally, it was observed that students at both universities have responded positively to the various resources available to them, such as social media, email, MS Office, online dictionaries, except for the use of podcasts and bulletin boards. On another positive note, regardless of their university affiliation, most students reported feeling motivated to learn English due to the resources provided by their instructors. The use of tools has notably improved the undergraduates' grammar and vocabulary proficiency.

Overall, these conclusions enable educators and policymakers to explore these findings further and implement the suggested model to enhance the effectiveness of online English learning through resource utilization, which is essential for successful education. Both public and private universities need to develop strategies to improve resource provision and ensure that their first-year undergraduates receive adequate training on how to effectively use these resources to learn English online.

Thus, educators must employ a diverse range of resources and best practices to advance students' listening and speaking skills. Moreover, the university management should consider providing additional training to educators to help them stay updated on technical skills. Furthermore, collaboration between public and private universities in their online English course delivery is vital for enhancing and upgrading resources, which would ultimately broaden the scope of online English learning, making it more adaptable and accessible. To support this initiative, the government and network providers need to investigate and ensure a reliable internet connection, which would enhance the stability and reliability of online learning.

In conclusion, the model introduced in this research prompts a thorough assessment of resource usage for effective online English learning in local state and private universities. This model may guide future research efforts to explore its applicability in other faculties and universities, allowing for adjustments tailored to unique contexts. Further studies can also investigate other factors contributing to effective online English learning.

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