Advantages and Disadvantages of Implementing the OPEN Course Educational Technology in English Language Classroom on Canvas

Pham Phuong Hoa

hoapp@tnus.edu.vn
Faculty of Languages and Cultures, TNU – University of Sciences, Vietnam

Abstract

The purpose of this study is to gain the deeper insight into the advantages and disadvantages of implementing the OPEN course Educational technology in English Language Classroom on Canvas. The qualitative method is used in the study to indicate the benefits and drawbacks when the OPEN course is integrated into the official subject in the academic curriculum for English Language major at Thai Nguyen University of Sciences (TNUS). The respondents of the study are one lecturer and 43 senior English Language students following the university transfer program who experienced the whole course. From the data obtained in the study, the results about the pros and cons arise in the course were revealed. The findings suggest some possible solutions to tackle with the shortcomings of the course.

Keywords: Advantages; disadvantages; OPEN; Educational technology; English language classroom; Canvas

1. Introduction

Online Professional English Network (OPEN) Program sponsored by the U.S. Department of State with funding provided by the U.S. Government and administered by FHI 360 is becoming more and more popular among international English teaching professionals. It offers them access to cutting-edge, online university-level courses and teacher professional development activities. In light of Regional English Language Office (RELO) in Vietnam, all the OPEN courses are implemented frequently in the variety of modes. Thanks to this, English language teachers and educators all over Vietnam can gain a lot of benefits in terms of knowledge, skills, community network, and professional development as well.

Educational technology in English Language Classroom is one of the OPEN courses which the researcher completed and then chose to adapt in the teaching context. According to Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affair, U.S. Department of State, through practical instruction, this course aims to assist English language teaching professionals all over the world in acquiring and maintaining fundamental technological knowledge and abilities. It will assist educators in integrating pedagogical expertise with technological know-how to improve language teaching and learning through reading, discussion, and the development of fresh learning activities. Participants will learn how to use technology for record keeping, feedback, and assessment as well as how to use it to enhance communication, teamwork, and efficiency by taking part in online discussion and presentations. This course is a kind of Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs) which European Commission (2014, p.2) defines as "an online course open to anyone without restrictions (free of

charge and without a limit to attendance), usually structured around a set of learning goals in an area of study, which often runs over a specific period of time (with a beginning and end date) on an online platform which allows interactive possibilities (between peers or between students and instructors) that facilitate the creation of a learning community. As it is the case for any online course, it provides some course materials and (self) assessment tools for independent studying".

The benefits and drawbacks of open online courses on Canvas can be explored through various theoretical lenses that shed light on different facets of online education. Social Learning Theory, originated by Albert Bandura (1977), posits that learners can derive advantages from observing and engaging with peers and instructors through online discussions, collaborative projects, and virtual communities. The social dimension of learning can amplify motivation, participation, and knowledge acquisition. Nonetheless, the absence of face-to-face interaction in online courses may present challenges for social learning, such as difficulties in interpreting nonverbal cues and establishing rapport.

The Community of Inquiry Framework, developed by Garrison, Anderson, and Archer, identifies three fundamental components for meaningful online learning: cognitive presence, social presence, and teaching presence. Cognitive presence involves the construction of meaning through critical thinking and reflection, while social presence entails establishing a sense of connection and interaction with others. Teaching presence encompasses the design, facilitation, and guidance of the learning experience by the instructor. In open online courses on Canvas, fostering these three presences is critical for cultivating a supportive and engaging learning environment. However, striking a balance between these presences and sustaining learner engagement may pose challenges in large-scale online courses.

According to the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) (Davis, 1989), learners' perceptions of the platform's utility in facilitating learning and its user-friendliness play a significant role in their engagement and satisfaction. Positive experiences with Canvas, such as an intuitive interface, access to diverse multimedia resources, and interactive features, can bolster learners' acceptance and adoption of the platform. Conversely, technical glitches, complexity, and inadequate support may impede learners' engagement and satisfaction with the platform.

In Transactional Distance Theory, proposed by Michael G. Moore, transactional distance may be influenced by factors such as course design, learner autonomy, and instructor-student interaction. Effective instructional design, communication strategies, and learner support mechanisms are essential for mitigating transactional distance and fostering learner engagement and success.

By employing these theoretical frameworks, researchers and educators can gain deeper insights into the advantages and disadvantages of open online courses on Canvas and devise strategies to enhance the online learning experience for learners.

Regarding the urgent teaching practical needs, the author was assigned to teach the course Educational technology in English Language Classroom with the number of 04 credits. Apparently, this course shares the similar name, duration and contents with the OPEN course. In addition, it is very convenient for the author to be able to immediately apply the skills and knowledge trained by the OPEN course, at the same time reuse and adjust the original source material accordingly and proceed in the class. Additionally, there have been not many studies to examine the advantages and disadvantages of a particular course on Canvas.

For the reasons above, a case study to investigate the course Educational technology in English Language Classroom on Canvas is a must to contribute to clarifying the specific pros and cons of the course and then enhancing the effectiveness of the next OPEN courses in the future.

2. Methodology

2.1. Research Environment

Thai Nguyen University of Sciences (TNUS), a pivotal component of Thai Nguyen University, was the subject of the research. Over the past two decades since its establishment, TNUS has garnered renown as a hub for education, research, and the dissemination of technology across various disciplines including natural sciences, social sciences, and humanities within the central and northern mountainous regions of Vietnam.

2.2. Research Design

The data of the study were collected from students' opinions from face-to-face lessons, their comments on Canvas and Zalo group, and ideas from personal interviews between lecturers and students at the end of the course. With the use of qualitative research method, the study is expected to discover the advantages and disadvantages of conducting the course comprehensively.

2.3. Participants

The participants in this study were 43 senior English major students enrolled in the university transfer program at TNUS. They hail from various districts within Ha Giang, a mountainous province in Northern Vietnam, and are employed as teachers in local primary and secondary schools.

Table 1 outlines the gender distribution of the respondents. The data reveals that the majority, comprising 83.72 percent or 36 out of 43 individuals, are female. Conversely, there are 7 male respondents, accounting for 16.28 percent of the total sample. This trend mirrors the broader pattern observed in the teaching profession in Vietnam, where the female workforce predominates.

Table 1. Respondents' Gender

Gender	Frequency	Percentage
Male	7	16.28%
Female	36	83.72%
TOTAL	43	100.0%

Table 2 illustrates the educational background of the students. It is evident that the majority, comprising 76.75 percent of the respondents, hold an Associate degree, while only 10 individuals, representing 23.25 percent, have achieved tertiary education.

Table 2: Respondent's Educational Attainment

Educational Attainment	Frequency	Percentage
The degree of Associate	33	76.75%
Bachelor's degree	10	23.25%
TOTAL	43	100.0%

Table 3 provides an overview of the majors pursued by the respondents. Among the 10 individuals with bachelor's degrees, none are specialized in English or related fields. Conversely, 27 out of the remaining 33 respondents, who are majoring in English Language Education at college, constitute 62.79 percent of the total. This suggests that the participants in this study possess a foundational understanding of English, potentially facilitating the implementation of the course.

Table 3: Profile of Respondents' Majors

Profile	Frequency	Percentage
English Major	27	62.79
Non English Major	16	37.21
TOTAL	43	100.0%

2.4. Data Gathering Instrument

The research employed various data collection instruments, including learning tasks incorporated into the course, classroom observations, and interviews. These tools aimed to gather personal information from respondents and elicit their opinions on the course as a whole, its content, and their engagement in the coursework.

The methodology outlined in the study serves as a framework guiding researchers in conducting the investigation. Further elaboration on data analysis and results is provided in the subsequent section.

2.5. Data Gathering Procedure

All participants received a concise overview outlining the study's objectives, procedures, and its significance. A comprehensive strategy was devised to seamlessly integrate the course into the curriculum, ensuring that all students could effectively navigate the syllabus. The plan delineated the timeline, tasks, resources, and tools right from the outset of the course. Upon its completion, the data gathered from learning tasks, observations, and interviews were meticulously prepared for analysis and interpretation.

2.6. Procedure of data analysis

The process of analyzing the data involved several steps. Initially, the collected data from learning tasks, observations, and interviews were compiled and organized systematically. This ensured that all relevant information was readily accessible for analysis.

Next, qualitative analysis techniques were employed to examine the data. Qualitative analysis focused on identifying themes, patterns, and trends within the qualitative data, such as interview transcripts and observational notes. This involved coding the data, categorizing responses, and identifying recurring themes or significant observations.

Following the analysis, findings were interpreted in light of the research objectives and existing literature. This process involved synthesizing the results, drawing conclusions, and discussing their implications.

3. Results

3.1. Advantages

Most of the students are primary and secondary English language teachers, so they exposed to demonstrate their acumen in technology. In addition, the OPEN Course is all used in English, and it was held in the final semester of the program; therefore, the students did not encounter any language difficulties and then could understand the tasks and activities given in the course thoroughly.

Moreover, the course the lecturer was in charge had 4 credits, so it was quite equivalent to the duration of the course on OPEN. Besides, the course took place in a rolling format, so the lecturer could implement it continuously, without being interrupted by other subjects. Hence, this seemed be advantageous to contribute to the success of the course.

In fact, the lecturer taught the students the subject English Vocabulary in semester 2. Therefore, she had the opportunity to interact, share and teach them. Since then, she has accumulated certain insights about her target learners, learning styles, and classroom environment. Besides, the course was conducted in the form of 100% online due to the influence of the COVID epidemic, so in the teaching process, she applied some IT applications in teaching. The students in the class showed their interest in learning to know how to design and use those apps in their classroom. These might be the advantages that helped the lecturer to conduct the course "Educational technology in English Language Classroom" more smoothly.

Finally, the lecturer is very passionate about technology, eager to learn and innovate herself, wants to share and be shared. For the reason, she attended many OPEN courses as a student such as Teaching Grammar Communicatively, Integrating critical thinking skills into Exploration of Culture in an EFL setting, TESOL methodology, Educational Technology in English language classroom. What is more, she is a member of the organizing committee of VietTESOL's VMOOCs group, which organizes MOOCs (Mass Open Online Courses) for English teachers. One of those courses was OPEN's Educational Technology in English language classroom. Apparently, she possessed a variety of experiences in OPEN courses, which was beneficial in the implementation of the course for senior English language students following the university transfer program at TNUS.

3.2. Problems and Solutions

During the course implementation, some underlying issues were identified and addressed with proposed solutions aimed at mitigating their impact. The table below outlines the specific problems and solutions encountered by both the instructor and participants.

Problems	Solutions
From students One-third of students are teaching subjects other than English in high school. This inevitably caused certain difficulties when the lecturer conducted this course. Since these students' needs may be different from those of students currently teaching English, their learning motivation is not similar. There are 10 students at older ages (born between 1973 and 1979) who might be shy to get access to technology.	Right at the beginning of the course, the lecturer explained very clearly and specifically the role of the subject in the students' professional work. Through this, all students saw that the use of information technology in the classroom is not only meaningful in foreign language teaching but also in all other subjects. The lecturer showed her empathy, be available to assist and answer questions. She also set up the Zalo group to be able to interact and support students in a timely manner. In addition, when conducting group activities, she paid attention to group division to ensure that there was cooperation between members who are proficient and afraid to use technology, young and old members. Furthermore, the activity requirements for older students were lighter to motivate them to try and complete the learning tasks.
From the lecturer It took a lot of time and effort to invest in the subject when it was necessary to adjust some content (can be added or reduced) to suit the teaching context and learners. Besides, when the	The lecturer had to organize and manage her time reasonably and effectively. To deploy the course more smoothly, she selected a student who is proficient in using technology as a classroom

course was implemented at the initial stage, there was no teaching assistant, so it was difficult for the lecturer to manage and give feedback to students.	assistant, and that student was recognized through getting bonus points for the subject.
From infrastructure Internet connection during face to face classroom sessions was unstable, power sockets were limited due to unmodern classroom infrastructure. These could affect the quality of the course because the subject is highly practical and the students had to design a lot of IT applications. Schools where the students work was equipped with no or poor Internet connection. Besides, they teach at the elementary and secondary school levels in rural areas, so their students do not have many technology devices.	The lecturer informed the class in advance about bringing to class a fully charged computer/ phone and an electrical outlet with a long enough cord so that students could actively prepare devices, ensuring that the lesson was performed effectively. Depending on the situation, the lecturer assigned the students to work in groups of 4-5 when teaching in class, 1 group used 1 computer/ device to access the Internet in case the Internet connection was not stable. Additionally, she designed activities with IT applications in the form of homework and pair/group work so that students could use the Internet at home, ensuring the activities went smoothly.

Last but not least, to minimize the possible drawbacks during the course, the lecturer made a careful preparation by creating learning design and summary for each module. Here is a vivid illustration as follows.

Learning Design for: Using Educational Technology for Teaching Writing

Context

Topic: Technology for Teaching Writing

Total learning time: 3 hours and 30 minutes

Designed learning time: 3 hours and 5 minutes

Size of class: 43

Description: Using technology in teaching writing and the connection between writing and technology

Mode of delivery: Blending learning (face to face and online via Canvas)

Aims

Explore how technology can be used in the teaching and learning writing.

Provide the kinds of technology that can be used to teach writing and the considerations associated with using the technology

Adapt your current teaching to the online environment.

Teaching-Learning activities

Activity 1: What is the Technology-Writing Connection?

Read Watch Listen   30 minutes   43 Students

1.1 Watch the lecture videos about "What is the Technology-Writing Connection?"

Practice   10 minutes   43 Students

What is the Technology-Writing Connection - Follow-on quiz

This graded quiz will test your understanding of the concepts introduced in the 'What is Technology-Writing Connection?' lecture. This quiz is worth 10 points and consists of 5 questions. You will have unlimited attempts to take this quiz; only your highest score will be kept.

Activity 2: How Can Technology Help?

Discuss   *10 minutes*   *43 Students*

1.2 Warm-up Questions
Think about how you would address the following questions.
• Recognizing Register.
> *How do you ensure that students recognize the importance of recognizing different registers?*
• Locating "model" or register-appropriate texts.
> *How do you go about finding such register-appropriate texts?*
• Writing as a Process.
> *How do you structure your assignments so that the different processes can be employed?*
• Collaborative Writing.
> *Do you use collaborative writing assignments?*
• Grammar Checkers.
> *Do you demonstrate grammar and spell checking tools in your classroom?*
> *If so, do you point out the advantages and limitations of these tools?*

Read Watch Listen   *15 minutes*   *43 Students*

1.3. Watch the lecture videos about "How Can Technology Help?".

Practice   *10 minutes*   *43 Students*

How Can Technology Help: Follow-on Quiz

This graded quiz will test your understanding of the concepts introduced in the 'How Can Technology Help' lecture. This quiz is worth 10 points and consists of 5 questions. You will have unlimited attempts to take this quiz; only your highest score will be kept.

Activity 3: Learn more about useful word processing features

Read Watch Listen   *10 minutes*   *43 Students*

1.4 Watch a tutorial video to learn more about useful word processing features

Practice   *10 minutes*   *43 Students*

Learn More about Useful Word Processing Features: Self-assessment.

This graded quiz will test your understanding of the 'Learn More about Useful Word Processing Features' lecture. This quiz is worth 10 points and consists of 5 questions. You will have unlimited attempts to take this quiz; only your highest score will be kept.

Activity 4: Share How You Use Technology for Teaching Writing

Discuss   *20 minutes*   *43 Students*

1.5 Based on your understanding of the lecture, please answer the two questions below in a 200-250 word post.
1. Which uses of technology covered in the lecture would you like to implement in your teaching practice? Why?
2. What are some issues that you might encounter when implementing those uses in your teaching?

Collaborate   *5 minutes*   *43 Students*

In Discussion forum, you comment on at least one post given by other participant(s) of the course. Your response needs to be around 100 words.

Investigate   *5 minutes*   *43 Students*

Self-evaluation Criteria

Use the criteria to evaluate your own participation in the discussion board before posting. Please make sure that both your initial posts and follow-up responses to classmates meet our criteria.

Summary: Reflecting on this Module

Read Watch Listen   *5 minutes*   *43 Students*

1.6 Read the summary of the Module

Practice   *5 minutes*   *43 Students*

1.7. Self-assessment quiz

This graded self-assessment quiz will give you opportunity to bring the various aspects of the module together. This quiz is worth 10 points and consists of 10 questions. You will have unlimited attempts to take this quiz; only your highest score will be kept.

Investigate   *5 minutes*   *43 Students*

Post any general questions you have for the educators here, and 'Like' any others that you would like to see answered. Then we can prioritize how we address them. We begin answering questions on Saturday.

Discuss   *15 minutes*   *43 Students*

Reflections on the module

How have you adopted or will you adapt the theories into your teaching in practice, the potentials and the challenges?

Produce   *30 minutes*   *43 Students*

Write a draft plan of using a particular technological tool in teaching a writing lesson in your institution.

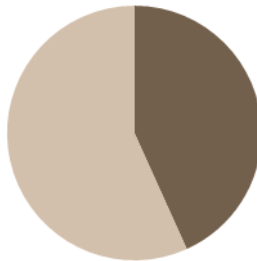**Representations of the learning experience**

	Learning through	minutes	%
	Acquisition (Read, Watch, Listen)	60	32
	Investigation	10	5

Discussion	45	24
Practice	35	19
Collaboration	5	3
Production	30	16

	minutes	%
Whole class	80	43
Group	105	57
Individual	0	0

	minutes	%
Teacher present	80	43
Teacher not present	105	57

4. Conclusion

This study investigates the typical advantages and disadvantages of implementing the OPEN Course Educational Technology in English Language Classroom on Canvas. These were analyzed in details when it comes to the lecturer, the students, and infrastructure. It is very interesting that the lecturer and students were aware of the difficulties that they had to deal with, thus practical solutions were provided timely. The biggest obstacle is that some students still expressed their concern about their proficiency in educational technology even though the lecturer and group members were willing to help them.

Infrastructure is really a significant challenge to overcome due to the fact that it requires the

cooperation among all the stakeholders such as government, policy makers, managers and experts in education, teachers, and students. The solution put forward in the study may be effective but temporary. It seems reasonable to suggest more comprehensive approaches to ensure that the stakeholders can find it easier to acquire the academic knowledge and practical experience in the course.

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