



**MSB- INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL
OF INTERDISCIPLINARY RESEARCH**
ASSOCIATING RESEARCHERS; NOURISHING INNOVATION
Peer Reviewed
Vol. 1, Issue 1, Sep.2022-
Nov.2022,
29-42MSB-IJIR

Students' Perspective on the Use and Effectiveness of Online Mode of Instruction in the English Teaching Learning Process in the Private Engineering Colleges of West Bengal under MAKAUT

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Abstract

The approach of blended teaching learning in higher education is practically expanding day by day and it is subjected to various challenges in the global competitive market. The current study investigates the students' perspective on the use and effectiveness of online mode of instruction in the English teaching learning process particularly in the private engineering colleges of West Bengal under MAKAUT. Therefore, self-evaluation questionnaire on the suitability and preference of the online mode were distributed, and the experimental outcome revealed the significant feedback by students regarding online mode of education in blended learning classes. The aim of this study, therefore, is to investigate the needs of the students and establish the suitability of the online mode in blended teaching learning scenario.

Keywords: Online mode, global competitive market, blended teaching learning.

Introduction

In the 21st century, the concept of online teaching gained fame and huge acceptability by the contingency of the universal pandemic CORONA-virus. Online mode and learning materials are uncomplicated and handy for students with higher degree accomplishment rates. Internet is playing a huge role in the promotion of online education. As the world is increasingly switching over to a digitalized platform, learners are gaining more and more access to numerous resources. Electronic devices has become a part and parcel of our daily lives making students not autonomous learners but also tech-savvy and providing them the comfort zone of learning as per their own time and space. However, it has been observed that online teaching –learning face certain barriers, which include lack of trained faculty members and sometimes the cost of execution of these types of courses, are very high. Though readily accepted by the students, the online mode often faces certain challenges with respect to poor network connections, syllabus modification, sense of seriousness and discipline etc.

In our country, the online mode of instruction for the learners to develop their English skills requires a new dimension to be worked upon in order to maintain the strict academic level. Few of these new dimensions include implementation of a new teaching methodology, a specific online English curriculum and infrastructural support from engineering institutions. With respect to the development of the communication skills of the engineering students how much effective is the online mode of instruction, requires to be explored. Within the coming years, online education may not be a substitution for offline education but both would go hand in hand giving first priority to blended mode of learning over specifically online or offline mode.

Online mode of New Areas in E.L.T

English language has attained international acceptance because of its multi-dimensional functions and predilection over several other languages over the globe. Development of the four language skills in English assures professional competency in the competitive global market. As Kaushik and Kumar (2020) explain:

“English makes it extremely convenient to communicate any official information or preparing business documents or passing information to a larger part of professional bodies... For any kind of education, economic activity, trade administration; beside the core knowledge of specific trade, an excellent command over written and spoken English is necessary.” (p. 254)

In e-learning the hub of instruction has been, reading or acquaintance with the grammatical rules and to develop the vocabulary of the target language Grammar Translation Method was used. If the focus of instruction was speaking, Direct Method, Audio-Lingual Method, The Silent Way, Suggestopedia, Community Language and Communicative Approach was chosen. With the emergence of Information and Communication Technology (I.C.T.), online language teaching learning classes have gained immense popularity. Computer Assisted Language Learning (CALL) and Mobile-Assisted Language Learning (M.A.L.L.) are usually picked over traditional ‘chalk and talk’ teaching methods. According to Kent:

“ICT in education point of view refers to Information and Communication Technology such as computers, communications facilities and features that variously support teaching learning and a range of activities in education [QCA schemes of work for ICT in Kent country council, 2004].”

The online teaching mode has clearly established that learning is not restricted to time or

place i.e., students can learn anything from anywhere. E books, Audio books, Interactive white boards help to develop communication skills more easily. Gareth Davis says:

“IWB brings everything together at one placemat one time with the use of authentic materials.”

Mobile digital devices like laptops, iPods, tablets, smart phones have made English language learning interesting and engaging. The apps which are available in the App store and Play store (Android) markets, furnish students with quizzes, games, dictionaries, Podcasts and tests. Ammani and Aparanjani states:

“Mobile apps can perform as a personal 24/7 English language teacher. Some mobile apps which are amending English language learning and teaching are Dictionary.com, Hangman, Grammar’s, Quizmaster, 60- Second Word Challenge, Mobile Air Mouse, Ankhi Flash Cards, English Idioms Illustrated etc.”

The current era would gradually move forward to adopt a blended mode of teaching learning for the development of communication skills of the learners. Dudeney and Hockly (2012) pointed out how the development of various tools has transformed the English Language Classroom:

“We have already seen an increase in the development of mobile-friendly apps for smartphones by publishers and by educational institutions such as the British Council. We also see increasing numbers of e-Course books and e-Work books, in which course book components can be downloaded on to learners’ mobile devices or uploaded into a V.L.E., allowing for easier access outside the classroom. This, in theory, makes it easier for the English language teacher to introduce a blended component (part online, part face to face) to purely face-to-face teaching. This is a trend that we see increasing numbers of teachers following, and which is set to continue.” (p. 540)

Methodology

For this research paper, a survey was conducted among engineering students learning English in the private engineering colleges of West Bengal under MAKAUT. A questionnaire was prepared and distributed among nearly 250 students in 10 colleges to identify the effectiveness of teaching the English language and its related skills through the online mode of instruction. A set of 16 questions were designed for students. The responses thus, received were carefully represented as graphs, pie charts etc.

Survey Analysis of Student’s Questionnaire

For the survey, questionnaires (Appendix I) were distributed to 250 students, out of which response was received from 200 students. The samples of 150 male students and 50 female students, ranging between 18 -21years of age. The male students constituted 75% whereas the female students constituted 25% of the sample.

The other demographic details of the students i.e., financial background, schooling background etc. were collected to ascertain the socio-economic challenges faced by the students.

For the first question in Section II, data collected revealed that 77% of the students (154/200) felt that online mode should be implemented in the teaching learning process as it plays a major role to develop their career.

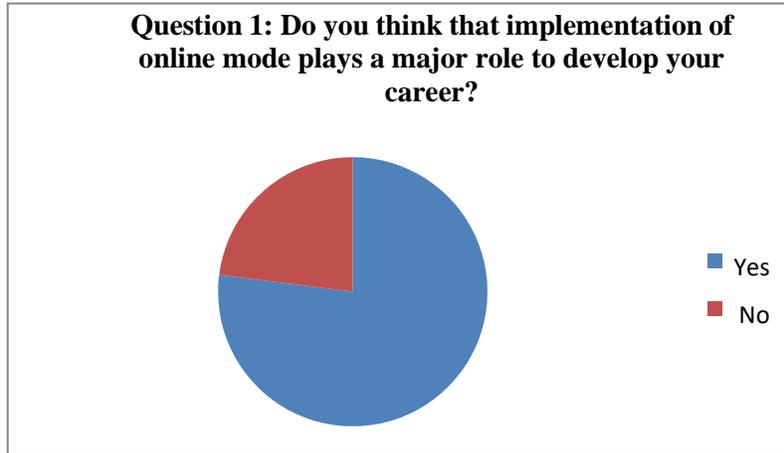


Fig 1

Majority of the students for question no. 2 reported that they do not face much difficulty to use online mode to follow advanced listening sessions. Out of 200 students, 115 students(57.5%) responded that they do not face difficulty, 20 students(10%) reported that they do not face any problems, while 65 students(32.5%) reported that they sometimes face problems.

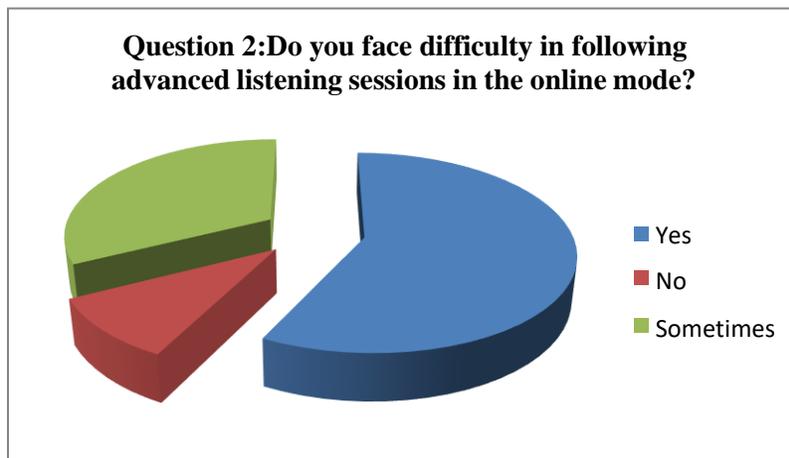


Fig 2

Question no. 3, 4 and 5 was “Likert style” questions based on five-level responses. The respondents were required to choose from among five responses viz. ‘always,’ ‘often,’ ‘sometimes,’ ‘never,’ and ‘no idea.’ Question no. 13 was also a “Likert style” question where students had to select from ‘strongly agree,’ ‘agree,’ ‘neutral,’ ‘disagree,’ and ‘strongly disagree.’

For Question no.3, of 200 responses received, (10 students) 5% students mentioned that they ‘always’ faced difficulty. Nearly 7.5% of the respondents (15 respondents) opted to ‘often,’ while 10% students (20 respondents) chose ‘sometimes.’ It was observed that 75% respondents (150 respondents) chose ‘never,’ only five respondents, or 2.5% of the total, opted ‘no idea.’

The analysis lets us understand that students do not face much problem to develop their speaking skills through the online mode.

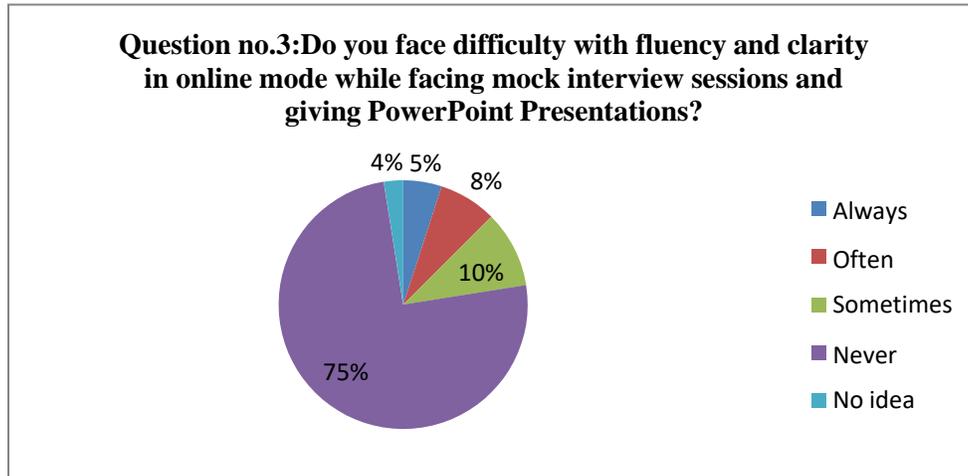


Fig 3

Data analysis of Question no. 4 revealed that students require more reading activities in their online classes. For this reason, majority respondents preferred the option “sometimes” rather than “always” or “often.” Out of 200 responses received, only 11 respondents (5.5%) added that they “always” have reading activities in class. Six respondents i.e., 3% of the total respondents opted to ‘often,’ while 170 respondents (85%) chose ‘sometimes.’ While 10 respondents (5%) chose ‘never,’ only three respondents (1.5%), of the total, opted ‘No idea.’ The analysis to this question indicated that though sufficient speaking activities were conducted but students required more and more reading activities to develop their English skills.

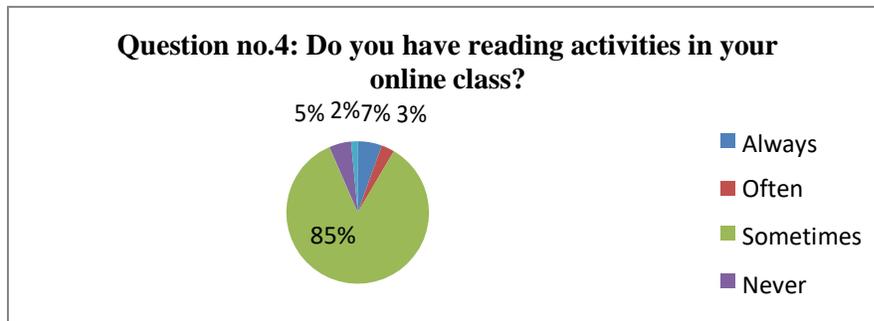


Fig 4

Responses received for question no. 5 clearly indicated that students felt that very often participation in online writing activities improved their writing skills. Out of 200 students, 40 students (20%) opted for “always,” 147 students (73.5%) opted “often”, 8 students (4%) chose “sometimes,” 6 students (3%) chose “never” and 3 students (1.5%) chose “no idea.”

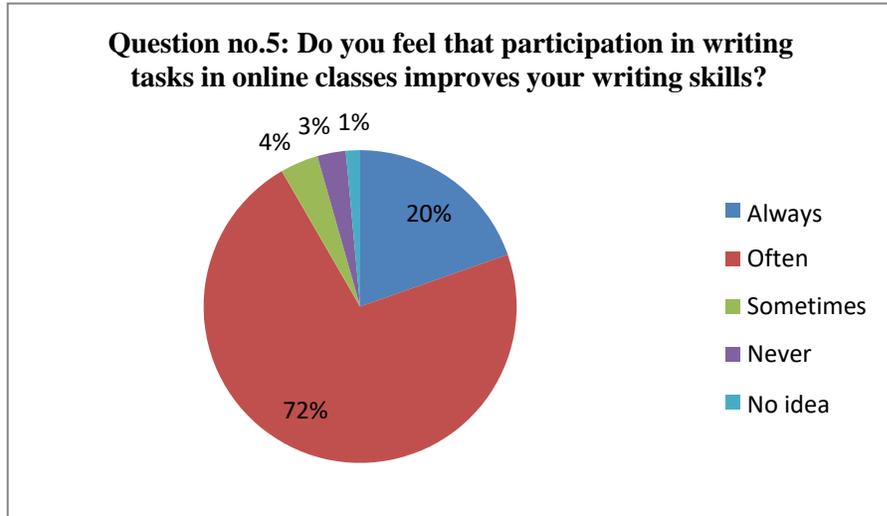


Fig 5

For question no. 6, the opinion of the students revealed that 86% of the students believed that the present traditional MAKAUT syllabus should be replaced by an online English syllabus to develop their communication skills, giving them the comfort to study at their own ease and convenience, however 10% students replied negatively and 4% was not sure.

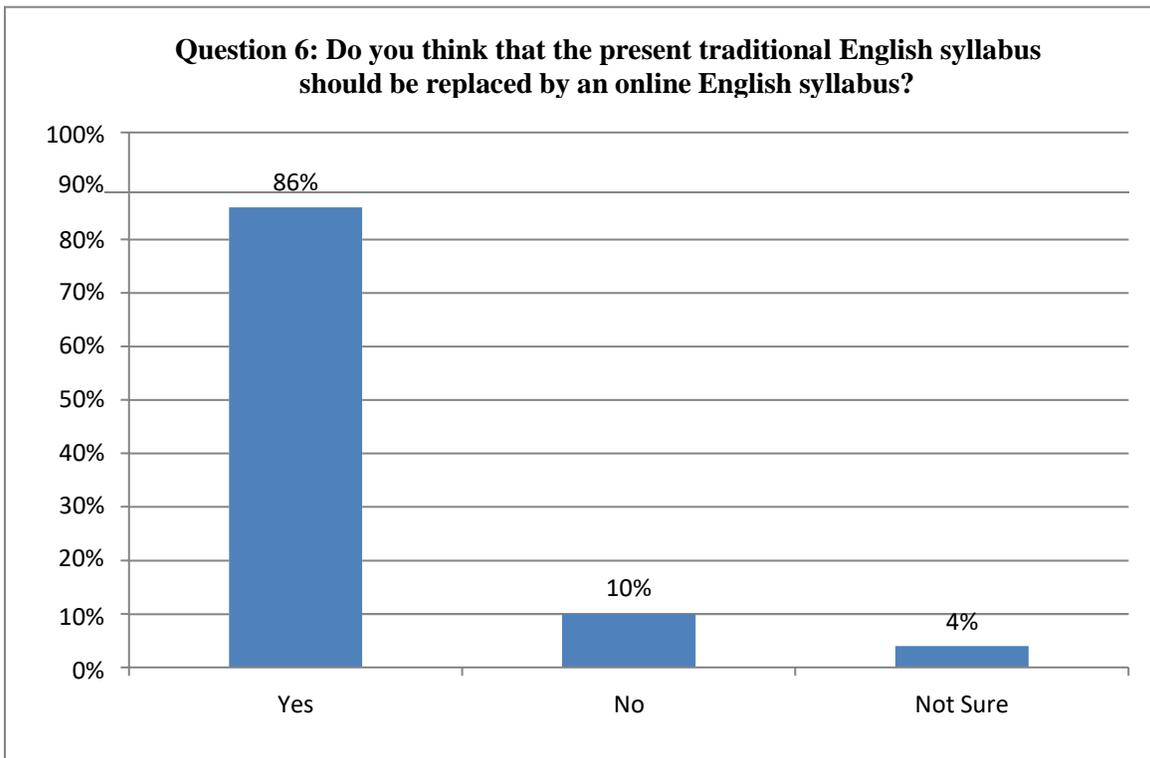


Fig 6

On further investigation (Question no. 7) it was found that 23% students spent 30-40 minutes everyday on online classes, 2% students spent 1-2hrs for online classes and 75% of the students spent 3-4hours every day on online classes. Data analysis here revealed that students spent a considerable amount of time daily for attending online classes.

As a tag to Question no. 7, it has been observed that for Question no. 8, majority of the students are satisfied to pursue online education for a considerable part of the day. The results of the analysis reveal that 92% students are satisfied to pursue online classes for three to four hours everyday, while 6% are not so and 2% are not sure of the situation.

The responses collected for Question no. 9(a) revealed that 88% students prefer to use digital or technological devices to improve their communication skills. Result of the analysis for Question no. 9(b) reveal that among computer (25%), tablets (10%) and mobile phones (65%) the most preferred device for online classes are mobile phones.

It has been observed, that for Question no.10, 89.2% students responded that they receive online learning materials from their institution to develop their English skills, whereas 10.8% responded that they did not get so.

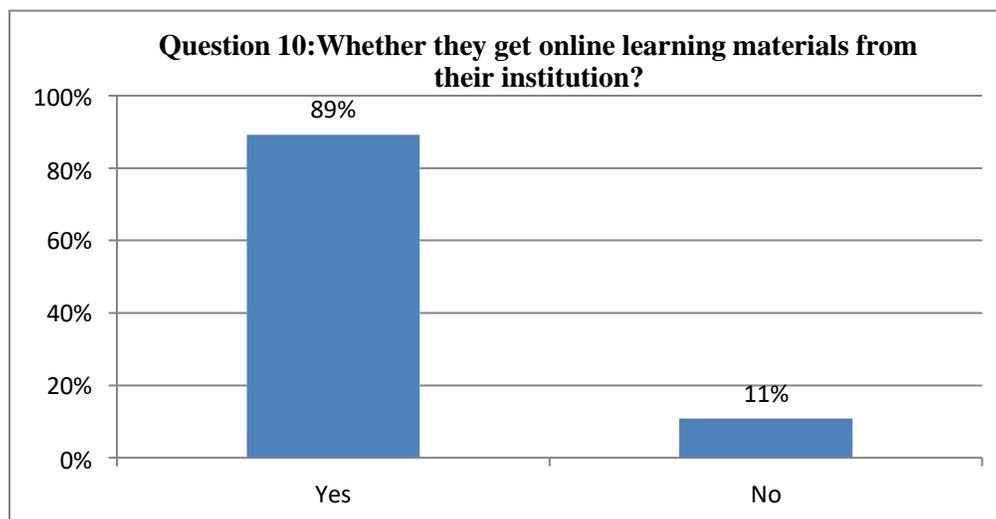


Fig 7

Data collected from Question no. 11 revealed the infrastructural assistance provided by the institution with respect to development of English skills through the online mode. Seven students did not respond to this question. The results of the analysis reveal that institutions require to be more and more well equipped to facilitate teaching learning through the online mode.

SI No.	Facilities	Responses	Percentage
1	Multimedia Language Laboratory	110/200	55%

2	Computer with internet access in the classroom	5/200	2.5%
3	Digital classrooms	3/200	1.5%
4	Classroom with projector facility	75/200	37.5%

Fig 8

Responses for Question no. 12, revealed that the students were using many e-learning platforms. Zoom was most popular among engineering students, as 75% students opted this option. The analysis projected 20% students utilized Microsoft Teams, 4% students used Moodle and 3% students chose other e-learning platforms such as Google Meet.

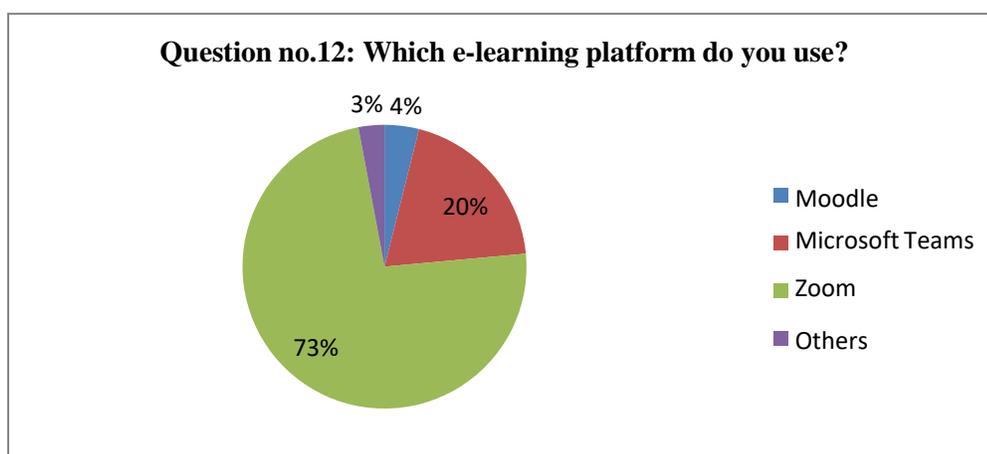


Fig 9

Data collected for Question no. 13 revealed that students do agree that online exams are easier than traditional English exams. Analysis for this question disclosed that 78% students agree to this statement, 10% students mentioned that they strongly agree to this statement, 2% students chose to disagree, 6% students strongly disagreed whereas 4% students chose to remain neutral.

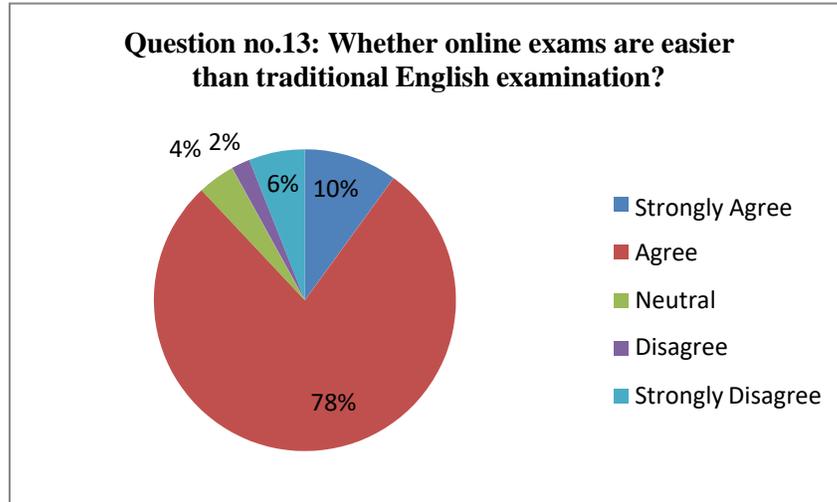


Fig 10

Question no. 14 was framed to collect data regarding the interest of the students to participate in online classes. It was observed that 79% of the students (159/200) found the classes stimulating and interesting, 16% students (31/200) found it motivating, whereas 5% students (10/200) found the classes boring.

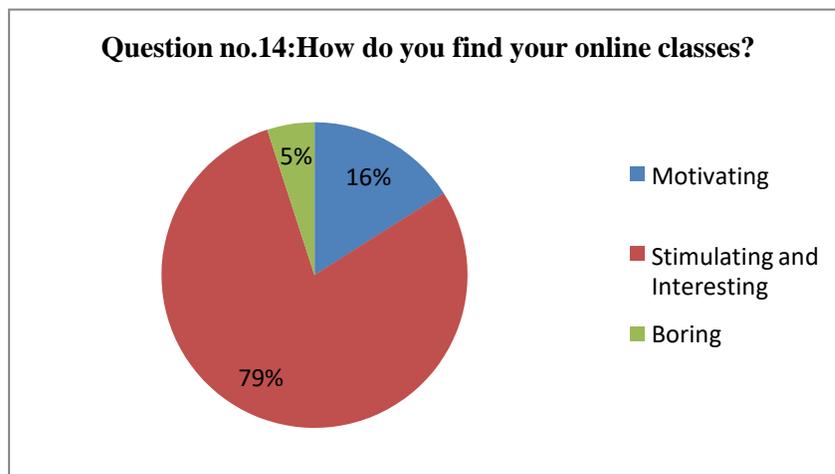


Fig 11

Data collected for Question no. 15 indicated that students were of the opinion that training for TOEFL/GRE/IELS via online mode is possible to a certain extent to improve their future job prospects. While 140 students (70%) responded positively for this question, 34 students

responded negatively (17%) and 26 students (13%) had no opinion in this regard as they were not sure of the situation.

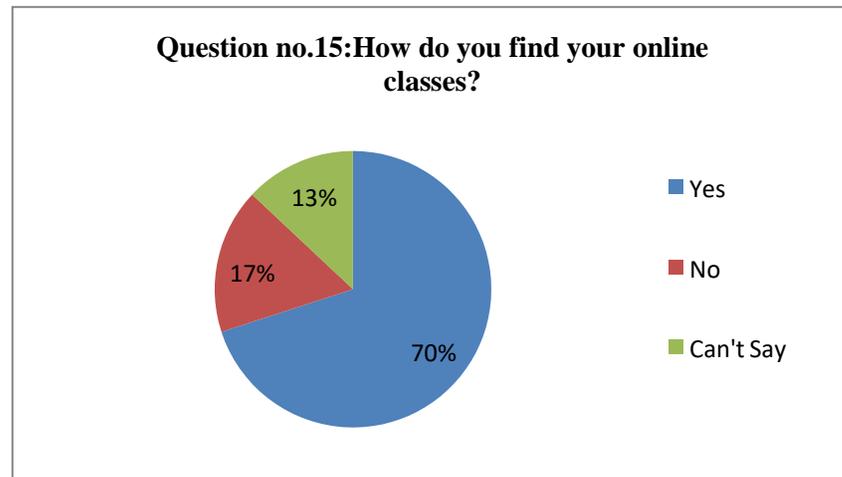


Fig 12

The response to the last question i.e, Question no. 16 revealed that students do prefer a blended mode of learning as 180 students chose the option “Yes”(90%), 7.5%(15 students) opted the answer “No” and 2.5% (5students) opted “Not Sure.”

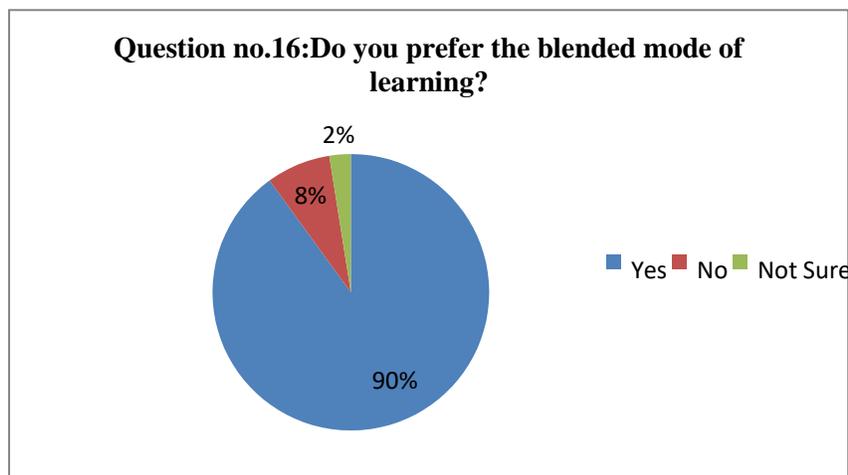


Fig 13

Results

The survey, which was held among 200 engineering students, tried to look into the problems and challenges of online classes which was included in our education system and gained immense popularity during the pandemic period. In this research paper, students were asked to provide their opinion on the various aspects of online classes. It was observed that with proper infrastructural facilities, up gradation of English syllabus, interaction with trained faculty members students would be able to participate effectively in online classes.

The analysis indicated that keeping in mind the high academic standards of engineering time has come when a considerable shift is required from the traditional classroom to the online platform. Teachers do need grooming and training to develop online study materials to facilitate English language classes. Development of language skills of the learners through online mode and changes in the evaluation system is the need of the hour. Moreover, teachers have understood the versatility of the online classes, and a majority do plan to use a blended mode of teaching & learning. Learners with proper guidance would easily adhere to the blended mode of learning.

Conclusion:

Post-pandemic, online classes will continue as a part of the blended mode of teaching-learning process in many educational institutions. It is highly desirable that policy makers, educationists and other government agencies develop a suitable online teaching learning framework with respect to curriculum development, material and content development, usage of I.C.T tools etc. Most of the private engineering colleges in West Bengal do not have the infrastructure to promote online teaching and learning. Proper measures taken in this regard with introduction of new techniques in online teaching-learning will open new avenues for the engineering students to develop their communication skills in the most unique and effective way.

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Appendix I

Questionnaire for Students

I. Learner's Profile:

1. Gender:
2. Name of Institution:
3. Discipline:
4. Age:
5. Nationality:
6. Native Place:
8. Family income/month:
30000-50000 50000-1lakh above 1 lakh
9. Do you get any scholarship/ fellowship for your studies?
Yes () No ()
10. Have you taken any bank loan for you education?
Yes () No ()
11. Mother Tongue:
12. Other Languages known:
13. Schooling background:
i. Central Government ii. State Government iii. English Medium Schools
14. Number of years studied English as a subject: _____
15. Medium of Instruction at school level:
English Bangla Hindi Others specify _____

SECTION II

1. Do you feel that learning English through online mode plays a major role to develop your career?
Yes No Not sure
2. Do you face any difficulty in following advanced listening sessions in the online mode?
Yes No Sometimes
3. Do you face difficulty with fluency and clarity in online mode while facing mock interview sessions and giving power point presentations?
Always Often Sometimes Never No idea
4. Do you have reading activities in your online classes?
Always Often Sometimes Never No idea
5. Do you feel that participation in writing tasks in your online classes improves your writing skills?

Always Often Sometimes Never No idea

6. Do you feel that the present traditional MAKAUT syllabus be replaced by an online English syllabus to develop your communication skills?

Yes No Not sure

7. How much time do you spend for online classes everyday? Put a tick.

30-40mins _____ 1 hour-2hrs _____ 3hrs-4hrs _____

8. Are you satisfied with the present teaching hours devoted for teaching-learning English over online mode in your institution?

Yes No Not sure

9. a. Do you use a digital device to improve your communication skills? Put a tick

Yes No Not sure

b. Which one do you use?

Computer Tablets Smart Phones

10. Do you get any online learning materials to develop your English skills in your institution?

Yes No

11. What kind of facilities do you have in your institution for online language learning? Put a tick.

i. Multimedia Language Laboratory

ii. Computer with internet access in the classroom

iii. Digital classrooms

iv. Classroom with projector facility

Any other, please specify _____

12. Which e-learning platform do you usually use? (Pick any ONE)

a. Moodle: _____

b. Microsoft Teams: _____

c. Zoom: _____

d. Any Other: Please mention: _____

13. "Online examination is easier than traditional English exams." Tick the correct option.

a. Strongly Agree b. Agree c. Neutral d. Disagree e. Strongly Disagree

14. How do you find the online English classes?

• Motivating

• Stimulating and Interesting

• Boring

15. Do you think that training for TOEFL/GRE/IELS is possible via online mode to improve your future job prospects?

Yes No Can't say

16. Do you prefer a blended mode of learning?(Online and Offline)

Yes No Not sure