

# Distance Language Teaching

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## ABSTRACT

Distance language teaching is becoming a relatively popular and cost-effective method of imparting linguistics knowledge of a foreign language as students across the globe can be enrolled in such courses due to its convenience. Similar to numerous other disciplines, foreign language acquisition has also benefitted from the advancement of e-learning tools and technological communication platforms. In this paper, the majority of advantages of distance language teaching will be explored; it will also investigate how it differs from traditional face-to-face classroom teaching together with how students from all around the world who are seeking virtual foreign language education can benefit from these emerging services.

**Keywords:** *Distance language teaching; foreign language acquisition; benefits.*

## 1. INTRODUCTION

In the past time when the distant teaching technologies were not well-developed, it was necessary to relocate to a place closer to the school in order to obtain an education. However, with the advent of globalization and technological advancements, it has become possible and even more convenient to obtain education by utilizing the available e-learning resources (Starke-Meyerring, 2010). International universities have also started providing online courses to students around the world so that they can seize this opportunity to explore diverse learning materials or even be enrolled in degree programs without leaving home. In this case, distance learning adds flexibility and availability, regardless of time, place, or pace of learning. Because of its numerous advantages and convenience, remote learning and teaching have gained increasing popularity. According to Moore and Kearsley (1996), distance teaching is a planned learning activity that requires a special set of skills and arrangements such as specialized course design, different methods of communication, certain electronic delivery mediums, differentiated instructional techniques, and a unique administrative framework. In contrast with face-to-face teaching, several web-based technologies, including synchronous recording tools and multi-player voice devices, are employed by a large number of universities to provide intensive online distance teaching programs. Distance teaching plays a favourable role in the educational process as it not only allows flexibility in terms of time, workload, space but also enables students to adjust their own pace of learning.

Moreover, the proliferation of distance learning can also be attributable to its cost-efficient nature, which exerted positive effects on both the educational institutions and the students. Due to these accommodative reasons, students can be endowed with the opportunities to access numerous learning materials using minimum financial resources. They are also exempted from the commuting costs as they are not required to be physically present in the classrooms. As an indispensable part of students' overall development, teaching foreign languages at a distance has received substantial attention (Fidaoui et al., 2010). Therefore, the benefits of distance language teaching will be worth exploring.

### ***1.1. The Importance of Distance Language Teaching***

Distance teaching has become a major part of higher education institutions because students are immersed in the atmosphere where the e-learning portal represents a primary source of acquiring and advancing skills. Also, the technology and electronic devices to enable and facilitate distance learning are readily available in the market. This is especially advantageous considering the tremendously expanding demand for learning a new language since people are inclined to relocate and migrate to new countries for education, career promotion, or settlement purposes. Distant language teaching provides an exclusive opportunity to teach all these potential candidates through e-learning devices. Moreover, the standardization of such technological

resources has also functioned effectively in the growing popularity of distant learning.

Concerning language education, electronic resources have been created in both online and offline forms to facilitate linguistic impartation and linguistic communication between the instructors and students. Distant language teaching can be beneficial due to the fact that e-learning technology has the ability to enhance the learner's motivation in a way that is far more effective than traditional classroom learning. A variety of specialized courses are provided in distance language teaching programs including the theory of the foreign language acquisition, speech practicing modules, translation and interpretation training, and preparatory exercise for standardized international foreign language tests (Gunawardena & McIsaac, 2013).

## **2. HOW DISTANCE LANGUAGE TEACHING DIFFERS FROM TRADITIONAL TEACHING**

Online learning is significantly different from traditional classroom learning. For instance, a traditional classroom requires a student to adhere to a strictly arranged schedule, while with distance learning, students can adjust the timings according to their convenience. Secondly, distant learning makes it possible for students to adapt to their different self-paced learning styles based on their varied learning competence. It is critically significant in the realm of foreign language acquisition as students may not be pressured to absorb the knowledge of fundamental grammar and communicative skills at the same speed as others (Tucker, 2001). Thus, it is important that students can independently learn at their own pace and manage their time accordingly. Additionally, foreign language learners may encounter numerous intractable difficulties during the process; and online learning has the advantage of allowing students to communicate their questions to the instructors, who may then respond to them efficiently via emails or other written forms. However, in the traditional classroom, the queries are usually answered verbally. For that reason, distant language teaching can be more effective than traditional classroom teaching (Shachar & Neumann, 2003).

## **3. THE MERITS OF DISTANCE LANGUAGE TEACHING**

### ***3.1. Merits For Teachers***

Distant language teaching provides language instructors with a creative teaching approach to designing such online activities, thereby enabling students to grasp the linguistic foundations more efficiently and effectively. One common difficulty confronted by language learners is that they strive to acquire the new vocabularies of the intended language. However, with

remote language teaching, it is relatively effortless to utilize various applications and the available online vocabulary repository and dictionaries for vocabulary training (Hill & Slater, 1998). Furthermore, educational institutions can design specialized applications or online websites to teach language. For instance, e-learning portals are created for conveying comprehensive information on how to learn the targeted language starting from the basic requirements for enrolling in the course to the knowledge details covered in the course modules. Also, the student profile makes it easy for the instructor to adapt to the student's educational background and language competence.

Distant language teaching minimizes the instructor's involvement. Once the language course modules are completed, the resources are readily available with repetitive course content, so the teacher merely functions as the role of a communicator, a supporter, and a motivator (Easton, 2003). It is rather time-consuming in choosing, planning, designing, preparing, and developing the language resources; however, the teacher's burden can be alleviated once the module is ready for teaching. Moreover, students can watch the recorded video when failing to comprehend the relevance of the materials to their language studies. Besides, respective assessments and quizzes are uploaded on a regular basis, with the instructors merely being responsible for answering questions. Therefore, a modest teacher presence can be identified in distant learning, which allows the institution to employ a hybrid learning model where the functionality of online sessions and the physical classrooms can be both maintained to complement each other.

Distance language teaching boost instructors' efficiency. By providing various types of new-tech approaches such as marking assignments online and arranging online assessments, instructors' are allowed to conduct their teaching task in a more efficient way, since online correcting and editing saves more time in makes making comments and counting results of assignments, which enables the instructors more focus on improving their teaching skills and language proficiency. Also, distance language teaching tremendously increasing pedagogical practitioners' speed of designing and editing teaching materials with the emergence of scanning textbooks and making slides.

### ***3.2. Merits For students***

It is commonly acknowledged that providing feedback to students on their performance is as crucial as educating. Students receiving feedback frequently gain confidence, develop in their weakest academic areas, and enhance their overall learning competence (Schartel, 2012). Effective feedback from the instructor allows students to not only reflect on their learning and then adjust their learning strategies accordingly but enhance

the student-teacher relationship at the same time. There are various options available to provide immediate feedback to students in online language teaching. For instance, automated feedback can be utilized in learning management systems to explain standardized assessments and quizzes. Secondly, teachers can provide more personalized feedback to individual students. Lastly, peers feedback can also be obtained easily from remote teaching. It is of vital importance to extract insights from the students regarding the online teaching methodology, the course design, and the available resources in the online portal. Teachers might benefit from student insights as they creatively improve the effectiveness of distance teaching, enhance the instructor's teaching style, and expand the available learning materials. As a result, distance teaching can utilize the feedback and students' insights to enhance the productivity of both the students as well as the instructors. Apart from that, distance language teaching can expanding students-parents' participation. Specifically, hand-in-assignment system enables parents to check if students complete the homework on time. Online class also provides the opportunity for parents to observe if students are concentrating on the class. Also, parents are able to exchange their opinions towards assignments or teaching content on the online forum, which can form conducive feedback towards teaching activities as above mentioned. In this circumstance, appropriate parents' engagement can benefit both teaching and studying. Distance language teaching can also improve students' operating and self-controlling capability. Classes and assignments implemented in online mode requires students to operate the computer skillfully, typing or picturing in a justifiable speed enables them to take notes and do homework on time, which paves the way for catching up with the teaching pace. Also, ensuring themselves' focus on the class rather than using the online instruments to do other irrelevant things makes students more self-disciplined, which is conducive for their long-term study.

### **3.3. Merits Regarding Cost and Faculty**

Another major benefit of distant language learning is that it is far more cost-effective than traditional face-to-face one, which performs as a driving force to achieve educational enhancement. For students, distance learning can minimize the cost of traveling and relocating. Also, instead of being charged numerous additional services, including library fees, sports fees, and events fees, students are merely required to pay the tuition for university expenses. Moreover, for institutions, they can eliminate their teaching resources by minimizing the utility expenditure and instructors' workload as the recorded lectures are available for students to acquire knowledge and the teachers only need to be present when necessary. Accordingly, distance teaching can be

mutually beneficial for both the students as well as the institution and the instructors (Bartley & Golek, 2004).

The availability of experienced faculty is widely considered a dominant hurdle in providing educational services. For institutions, it might be difficult for universities to locate skilled professors for specialized disciplines such as language education (McPherson & Nunes, 2008), which is distinctively different from other science and arts subjects. This is not only because it is effortful to recruit a foreign teacher but also because foreign language teaching requires the instructor to ensure that the student has completely grasped the fundamental aspects of the language and has put their listening, speaking, reading, and writing skills into communicative use. Therefore, distance language teaching has removed the aforementioned barrier with global students taking advantage of the services of highly qualified and expert native language instructors. Also, this facilitates the instructors to find potential language students from around the globe and bring them to a single virtual classroom.

## **4. CONCLUSION**

To sum up, distant language teaching is regarded as an effective method of imparting knowledge, which allows abundant access to diverse candidates from around the globe. In addition, the substantial advancement and innovation in e-learning technologies render it convenient and popular to introduce online learning into language acquisition. Compared with traditional classroom learning, distance one is proven to be more effective and functional in educating students with strict geographical obstacles. Other benefits of distant language teaching include cost-effectiveness, immediate multimodal feedback, the availability of numerous online resources, and students' flexible learning arrangement of time and pace according to their learning abilities. Aside from increasing parents' involvement, distance language teaching also helps cultivate students' ability of self-managing. More importantly, online language learning enables students to acquire the intended language from an expert and native speaker. As a result of its multiple merits, distant language teaching is becoming increasingly popular with continuous improvements and innovation in e-learning technologies.

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