

ASYNCHRONOUS COMMUNICATION IN ONLINE TEACHING- LEARNING: A BRIEF OVERVIEW

Goutam Kumar Biswas

Assistant Professor in History,
Department of B.Ed., Uluberia College
Ph.D. Research Scholar in Education,
Seacom Skills University
Mail ID- goutam.pof@gmail.com

and

Nimai Chand Maiti

Professor, Department of Education,
Seacom Skills University

Abstract

The effectiveness of classroom communication varied for the presence of other intervening variables such as poor physical and psychological condition and also external variables such as unhealthy environment. On the basis of the nature of interactions and communication, online communication platforms can broadly classified into two such as asynchronous and synchronous style of communication. Asynchronous communication is an online interaction which occurs any time as per convenient to the teachers and the students. It does not require the real time interaction but provides the scope of sharing the contents or course materials with the frequent interaction as needed by the teacher and students. WhatsApp, email, discussion forum, webpage, weblog, web blogs, wikis, moodles, Google Classroom, MOOCs etc are such online platforms of asynchronous learning and communication. Asynchronous-teaching learning platforms have several advantages. Some of them are education friendly, time and labor saving, collaborative and co-operative, flexibility, transparency, affordability, stress management etc. It has also some demerits like no real time interaction and collaboration, lack of motivation and personal interaction, highly self disciplined oriented etc. Well planning, clarity of language, frequent instructions and feedback and use of synchronous platforms after an interval can be suggested.

Key Words: Asynchronous Communication Online Teaching- Learning merits demerits suggestions

Teaching is an interaction between the teacher and his students towards desired modification of their behavior. Teaching is an interactive process of involving classroom task between teachers and pupils to perform certain defined objectives. The teachers' role is also going to be changed frequently. Teaching-learning is not teacher dominated. He exposes students to a variety multiple educational media. Learning and assimilation accrues through a process of interaction between the teacher and the taught.¹ This interaction depends on classroom communication which is one of the important factors of teaching learning. The effectiveness of classroom communication varied for the presence of other intervening variables such as poor physical and psychological condition and also external variables such as unhealthy environment. The classroom communication and interaction can be conducted not only in offline mode but also in online mode.

With the process of global concept of education and the progress of educational technology, we are moving towards online and digital education system. Online education is the connection of ICT with internet. On the basis of the nature of interactions and communication, online communication platforms can broadly classified into two such as asynchronous and synchronous style of communication.

Asynchronous communication is an online interaction which occurs any time as per convenient to the teachers and the students. It does not require the real time interaction but provides the scope of sharing the contents or course materials with the frequent interaction as needed by the teacher and students. WhatsApp, email, discussion forum, webpage, weblog, web blogs, wikis, moodles etc are such online platforms of asynchronous learning and communication.² Today's popularly used Learning Management System (LMS) is used for sharing learning materials. The Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs) as introduced by educational institutions are dealing with asynchronous learning platform. Even program learning method provides the same opportunity for the learners to learn the concept themselves by finishing one step or scheme to another one till end of the program. Google Classroom is one of the easiest platforms of asynchronous teaching learning communication styles. It is the collaborative and co operative teaching learning platform. Any teacher or student having a valid mail id can freely access this online classroom. The functions of Google Classroom are better than the LMS as it continues to introduce new feature regularly. Grading, Rubrics and Google Meet are recently integrated. The latest feature named as 'originality reports' is really a plagiarism - checking tool.³

Advantage of A.T.L.P (Asynchronous Teaching Learning Platforms)

Asynchronous-teaching learning platforms have several advantages. Some of them are stated bellow –

1. Education friendly – The asynchronous teaching learning platforms can be used for transmission and sharing of knowledge and course contents by posting the materials with

information frequently as needed for completion of the course of program. The modern evaluation system can also be conducted through this platform.

2. Collaborative and co-operative – A large number of students, teachers and administrators from several institutions can join the group for the education purposes. They can freely share their opinions and provide the feedback. They can interact and respond to each other without scheduled real time meeting. They can easily collaborate through different online tools like discussion forum.
3. Time friendly – It provides ‘the freedom to plan our workday based on our most productive hours. With more flexibility, we can spend extended periods on more important task resulting in improved performance and productivity.’⁴ Irrespective of time zone, the interaction can be going on.
4. Flexibility of organization – It gives the opportunities to both the organizers and the students to conduct the class as well as assignments any time form any place as per their requirements. It does not require real time interaction, it does not advocate for get together or meeting in a place.
5. Greater transparency – All of the information materials and discussions or chat massages are automatically saved for which anyone can reference them letter. So the asynchronous platform of teaching learning system provides the greater transparency for documentation.
6. Stress management – In a very busy schedule the teachers and students may not be able to attend a real time face to face meeting if any one fails to attend the class or assignment or miss any one part of the whole class, he or she may not be able to recover unless any alternative is provided. Sometimes we may miss any point of learning materials during its discussion due to several psychological and physical problems and it reflected our mental stress. Our freedom of teaching and learning in the asynchronous communication manages our place, time, labor, money as well as manages our mental stress.
7. Less expensive or affordability – It is less expensive than the synchronous learning. It does not require any teacher on live. The teachers can record their teaching lesions and share or post the same for a number of times. A large number of students can view the lesions for a number of times also.

‘Many online classes are free including a wide open access library. So asynchronous learning class is a risk – free venture.’⁵

8. Self learning environment – In asynchronous learning platform, the learners have the free access to the class and supplemental materials. They can enjoy of taking control of their learning. They can enjoy the freedom to do their task at their own pace.
9. Belonging to broader social groups – This provides the scope of extending and social groups without physical presence. The sharing of knowledge on a small topic can extend our depth and social groups.

Disadvantages of A.T.L.P

It has also some demerits which have been pointed below.

1. No real time interaction and collaboration – Asynchronous learning does not provide real time interaction and collaboration. One will wait for another even for a long time. The slow response may effect on the attention and active engagement of the learners.
2. Lack of motivation – lack of live program and live directions from the authority including teachers can de-motivate the students, who may need frequent encouragement and stimulation for reading the materials and complete the task.⁶
3. Lack of personal interaction – It does not encourage personal interaction which sometimes needs to solve a complex problem. In return it makes slow down the learning speed and energy.
4. Highly self – disciplined and self – motivated- It requires highly motivated and strongly committed and disciplined which is not always expected from our learners.

Suggestions for improvement

1. Well planning and designing – In asynchronous communication teacher should design the course
Well before the transmission. They should plan to collect and arrange the study materials from different sources as the students can learn step by step easily. The teachers also plan to design and to conduct the assignments or test for the evaluation of the students. The well planning of the course contents will effect on the achievements of the students and success of the program.
2. Clarity of language – The language of instruction should be simple and easy enough so that it can be clear to all students. The teacher should use the standard language.
3. Frequent feedback and response – For better understanding the instruction as well as study materials, the teacher should always in touch of the group and provide the required feedback for every response. The frequent feedback will help the learners to motivate and to make reinforcement.
4. Clearance of instructions- The teachers should instruct the students what and when they have to do. Teachers should provide clear deadline to inform when the task will be due. In the absence of the teacher, the students themselves understand the schedule of the activities and submission of tasks or assignments within the due time. To clear any doubt, instructional videos and audio files can be uploaded. The clear and right instructions and documentation will provide the learning environment very active and effective.

In addition to the above suggestions, it will be better if synchronous learning platform can be created with an interval of the asynchronous learning. It may provide the opportunity for the benefits of both the online teaching learning platforms. The educational institutions are increasingly designing and implementing the online

educational program and tools. The educators are facing the questions of understanding pedagogical characteristics of online tools.⁷ Teachers and students should be encouraged and trained to use both of asynchronous and synchronous e-learning modes for effective instructional delivery in education.⁸

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