



Volume XXVI 2023

ISSUE no.1

MBNA Publishing House Constanta 2023



# Scientific Bulletin of Naval Academy

SBNA PAPER • OPEN ACCESS

## Online Teaching and Learning: A Conversation about Digitalisation

To cite this article: L. Cizer, *Scientific Bulletin of Naval Academy*, Vol. XXVI 2023, pg. 77-82.

Submitted: 05.06.2023

Revised: 26.07.2023

Accepted: 26.07.2023

Available online at [www.anmb.ro](http://www.anmb.ro)

ISSN: 2392-8956; ISSN-L: 1454-864X

doi: 10.21279/1454-864X-23-I1-008

SBNA© 2023. This work is licensed under the CC BY-NC-SA 4.0 License

# Online Teaching and Learning: A Conversation about Digitalisation

**L Cizer**

Department of Tactics and Naval Armament, Romanian Naval Academy, Constanta, Romania

[lauracizer@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:lauracizer@yahoo.co.uk)

**Abstract.** It is generally agreed that the new technologies have brought about a dramatic change in the way work has been performed worldwide in recent years; therefore, adapting teaching/learning materials to the digital environment has become the norm. But what did this entail? Such questions might arise throughout this process: does face-to-face traditional teaching still find its place within the maritime classroom? what novelties does e-learning (as didactic method) bring to it? which digital methods to use? is there a discernable shift from instructor to facilitator of instructional activities?, etc. This paper sets out to report on a close examination of the above-mentioned issues that the field of teaching/learning maritime/naval terminology in English is currently facing, as presented and discussed during a webinar related to this key topic.

**Keywords (3–5):** digitalisation, online, teaching, learning, maritime English, traditional.

## 1. Introduction

2020. The year when education witnessed a change in its paradigm due to the COVID-19 pandemic “affecting nearly 1.6 billion learners in more than 190 countries and all continents. Closures of schools and other learning spaces have impacted 94 per cent of the world’s student population, up to 99 per cent in low and lower-middle income countries”. [1]

The alternative to avoid the complete failure of the educational system was to go online, with a whopping 98% of Universities that have moved their classes online since 2020. [2]

Since its emergence in mid-1980s, the online learning (often referred to as e-learning or remote learning) has been used more or less sparingly. However, today teaching has definitely gone online, still creating the dichotomy between e-learning vs. face-to-face learning. In the light of all this, one legitimate question arises: Does face-to-face traditional teaching still find its place within the classroom?

A number of statistics and trends regarding in-person vs online learning in 2023 show that 70% of students agree that online classes are better than traditional classroom settings. They prefer online learning over a traditional learning setting based on the advantages this way of distance learning provides: reduced expenses, time-saving allowing learning to fit around your schedule and by using technology, you become more tech-savvy than ever. [3]

Also, E-learning can help students retain between 25% and 60% more information, compared to 8% to 10% when in the classroom.

Last, but not least, the online courses bring fast results since they can be finished nearly 60% faster than in-person lessons. This is mostly due to the fact that in-person courses are long and exhausting for students all around the world. Because students may work at their own speed, learning online can help them finish considerably faster than traditional semester-long courses. [4]

## 2. Does face-to-face traditional teaching still have a place within the maritime English classroom?

This is one of the questions with a particular focus on the maritime English class put up for discussion during the online webinar held by the International Maritime English Conference (IMEC) on February 16 – 17, 2023. Its well-chosen theme – “Challenges and innovations for sustainable teaching” – pinpointed the current issues that the maritime education and training (MET) has been facing, and fostered interdisciplinary exchanges of ideas, practices and teaching/learning methods and materials.

During the group conversation, the positive and negative aspects of both online and traditional learning were passed in review (see Table 1 below).

After pondering the pros and the cons and corroborating them with the personal experience, the following conclusion was drawn: the traditional classroom is actually outperforming its online education counterpart in terms of physical contact, student-teacher interaction creates stronger emotional bonding which cannot be achieved by sitting in front of a cold screen.

These aspects that are not the strongest suit of online education have definitely led to the conclusion that the traditional teaching in physical classrooms and the physical presence of participants (teachers and students alike) is not passé; on the contrary, it is here to stay. Actually, education in the pandemic has been referred to as “emergency remote teaching”, and it should be an interim choice in case of natural disasters or crisis situations that is not supposed to “equate (...) with online learning.” [5]

**Table 1. Summary table of pros and cons.**

Online Learning		Traditional Learning	
Advantages	Disadvantages	Advantages	Disadvantages
flexibility	less engaging	engaging	no flexibility
ubiquity	isolation	interpersonal relationships	time consuming
accessibility	connectivity issues	F2f interaction	
fast results	screen time	live communication	
attractive multimedia content	no print materials	schedule	
multitasking	no one-on-one interactions	active/hands-on learning	
frequent assessment & feedback	no live communication	campus life experience	
fewer expenses	not all materials can be adapted to online format		expensive
	increased responsibility		
	requires training		

However, it may not be about favoring one type of teaching over the other. Nothing can be absolutely positive or negative for someone. Everything comes with its advantages and disadvantages attached it, but in the long run, it all may come down to combining them in order to fully benefit from their best features. In this respect, blended learning could be the best solution. The concept is not at all new. As surprising as it may seem, it dates as far back as 1840s (with Sir Isaac Pitman as the initiator of the first distance education course), and its timeline witnesses such periods as the 1960s-1970s and the computer-

based training, the 1970s-1980s and the TV-based technology for live training, the 1980s – 1990s and CD-ROM and LMS training, 1998 that brought the first generation of web-based instruction, and from 2000 to present day when advanced technology has fostered a perfect blended learning integration. It also goes by different names in research literature; for instance, “technology-mediated instruction”, “web-enhanced instruction”, “mixed-mode instruction”, or “hybrid learning”.

At the heart of this type of learning lies American education psychologist Benjamin Bloom’s blended-learning theory (1968) which advocates for an educational process at the learner’s own pace followed by the teacher’s targeted feedback and support. [6]

Initially rather vague in its various combinations of different technologies and pedagogical methods and strategies, the blended learning became clearer in 2006 after Bonk and Graham’s contribution to defining the term in the first Handbook of Blended Learning as the method that “combine face-to-face instruction with computer mediated instruction”. [7]

Also, a more comprehensive definition comes from Banditvilai who define the term as “combining Internet and digital media with established classroom forms that require the physical co-presence of teacher and students”. [8]

Thus, when in-person learning meets online learning, this complementarity builds a fully integrated classroom that addresses the needs of all types of learners.

### 3. E-Learning as a didactic method and its novelties

Regarding e-Learning, there is no clear-cut definition. Indeed, there is a myriad of definitions, and most of them do not even share a common ground. [9]

To put it in a nutshell, e-Learning encompasses the use of digital tools for teaching and learning.

E-Learning has definitely changed the way students learn. Unlike traditional teaching methods in a classroom, eLearning makes it easier and is more effective. It shifted both the approach to learning which is now self-paced, more interactive and collaborative, and to teaching as teachers can now resort to an array of tools: hardware (smartboards, mobile phones, laptops, etc.) as well as software (websites, digital dictionaries, video tutorials, etc.) to name but a few.

For a teacher, the potential to exploit online resources is double fold: on the one hand, there are ready-made teaching materials, on the other hand, they can create new, personalized materials by using online educational tools which greatly facilitate the design of interactive content.

Among the novelties brought to class by eLearning, the task-based learning, flipped classrooms, interactive activities, self-assessment and peer assessment are worth mentioning. Also, online practices and the extensive use of Internet are very common with today’s learners, so using tools already familiar to them “allows them to perceive new connections between content material and lead to helpful collateral and serendipitous learning”. [10]



Fig.1 Several types of online activities

Therefore, the advantages that the eLearning provides are immense. Moreover, it constitutes a platform for students to learn at their comfort, staying engaged and motivated. That is, perhaps, why Bernard Luskin, a pioneer of e-learning, gives the “e” more valences such as “exciting, energetic, enthusiastic, emotional, extended, excellent, and educational” in addition to “electronic”. [11]

In the same line of thought, Parks suggested that the “e” be given other interpretations: “everything, everyone, engaging, easy”. [12]

Regardless of the online material, it is equally important that it brings added value to the learning/teaching process and that the teacher makes extensive use of technology that enhance the learning experience.

#### 4. Digital methods for use within the maritime English (ME) classroom

The teaching/learning of maritime-related vocabulary in English is a must for the students at the Naval Academy of Constanta, Romania, an in-house material was developed in order to help students master the mandatory naval lexis.

It is an online Maritime English Visual Dictionary that was devised by a team of ME lecturers within a research project (PSCD – 146/2016). It is hosted on the Romanian Naval Academy platform as it is intended as a resource for both classroom-use and/ self-study. It contains such rubrics as: the English word, its explanation, its translation and the corresponding picture.

After creating a large database from different maritime sources in English (both paper and online), over 500 maritime terms were selected according to their relevance and frequency within the documents.

Each and every dictionary entry was provided with clear and concise definitions, their IPA pronunciation, the Romanian equivalent, and authentic and illustrative photos that had been previously taken onboard several ships personally by the project members.

The strongest points of this online dictionary are numerous: quick and complete word search, familiarization with key terms within the maritime world, enhanced retention of terms through visuals, rapid connections between the unknown L2 lexical item and the already known L1 by providing the Romanian equivalent as well. Its ultimate purpose: to assist learners of ME with understanding onboard elements and communication.

This technological tool was essential in turning a collection of terms and photos into a functional and meaningful online dictionary. This digital resource can be found at the following address: <https://www.anmb.ro/dictionar/>

Number	Word	Spelling	Picture	Definition	Translation
1.	aback	ˈæbək		to be back of a the direction of the wind, waves, etc.	to back against the wind, against the waves
2.	aback	ˈæbək		to be back of the width of a ship's side	to be to starboard
3.	aback	ˈæbək		an expression of dissent or protest in public or in a group	opinion contrary
4.	aback	ˈæbək		to be back of a ship	to be to starboard
5.	aback	ˈæbək		to be back of a ship	to be to starboard

Fig. 2. Snippet of the Dictionary page

#### 5. What's in a name? That who we call a teacher ...

Another issue discussed during the forementioned webinar revolved around the fact that nowadays there might be a shift in the teacher paradigm. More precisely, the question was whether the teacher had become a facilitator of instructional activities, an instructor, a moderator, a mediator, a provider, an advisor, or even a guide. Attempts to provide definite answers were multiple.

References were made to American author Dugan Laird, a pioneer in training, who – 38 years ago – had noticed that “the truth is that in recent years our perception of the effective instructor has changed sharply. We are less concerned with platform skills; we are more and more concerned with skills in facilitating learning in others.” [13]

About ten years later Robert L. Craig reinforced the use of the label “facilitator” in the teaching profession while Carl Rogers boldly stated that we cannot “teach anyone anything, all we can do is facilitate their learning.” [14], [15]

In 2021 Geoff Rip pointed out the same shift, “teachers are becoming learning facilitators. Their role is shifting (...). As a facilitator, the teacher’s job is to support every student to do their best thinking and

practice. As a facilitator, the teacher encourages the full participation of students, promotes mutual understanding, and cultivates shared responsibility among students.” [16]

Indeed, the current role is to build on learners’ knowledge to help them build new learning constructs, to make them rely more on their learning experience and insights, and to engage learners to actively participate in creating, discovering and applying their learning material, thus taking ownership of their learning process.

Nevertheless, although both the teacher and the facilitator share the same purpose: to provide educational content and improve learning, there are several differences between them mostly in terms of the way they put their expertise on the subject to work.

For instance, according to the School of Education Online Programme “teachers create and implement learning materials, while facilitators support learners through the process and help maximize their education”. [17]

No matter how we look at it or the name we might want to use, it is definitely a flexible issue. Indeed, the role of the teacher is no longer the same as in the traditional class back in the days, and the most important aspect to cover is to make sure that the learning process is comprehensive and allows learners to find their own voice and learning path in order to grow constantly.

## 6. Conclusions

To sum up, in the modern days of teaching English, there are endless choices to make when deciding how to do our teaching. To quote American philosopher Sidney Hook’s: “Everyone who remembers his own education remembers teachers, not methods and techniques. The teacher is the heart of the educational system.” [18]

Therefore, it undeniably lies with the teacher the responsibility to find the appropriate methods and tools in order to make the education relevant to learners that are living in a constantly changing world.

## References

- [1] Policy Brief Education during Covid-19 and Beyond. UN Report August 2020.  
Available online:  
[https://www.un.org/development/desa/dspd/wp-content/uploads/sites/22/2020/08/sg\\_policy\\_brief\\_covid-19\\_and\\_education\\_august\\_2020.pdf](https://www.un.org/development/desa/dspd/wp-content/uploads/sites/22/2020/08/sg_policy_brief_covid-19_and_education_august_2020.pdf)  
(Accessed on 24 April 2023).
- [2] Higher Ed Partners (2021). The legitimacy of online learning vs traditional learning September 9, 2021 Available online:  
<https://higheredpartners.co.uk/the-legitimacy-of-online-learning-vs-traditional-learning/>  
(Accessed on 24 April 2023).
- [3] Online Education Programs: Benefits of Online Degrees, University of Potomac, June 26, 2022  
Available online: [https://potomac.edu/online-education-why-get-an-online-degree/Statistics & Trends in 2022](https://potomac.edu/online-education-why-get-an-online-degree/Statistics&Trends_in_2022) (Accessed on 24 April 2023).
- [4] Khan, Muhammad Jazib. (2022). Facts And Stats That Reveal The Power Of The eLearning Sector January 20, 2022 Available online: <https://elearningindustry.com/facts-and-stats-that-reveal-the-power-of-the-elearning-sector> (Accessed on 24 April 2023).
- [5] Hodges, C.; Moore, S.; Lockee, B.; Trust, T.; Bond, A. (2020). The Difference Between Emergency Remote Teaching and Online Learning. Available online:  
<https://er.educause.edu/articles/2020/3/the-difference-between-emergency-remote-teaching-and-online-learning> (Accessed on 6 April 2023).
- [6] Bloom, B. S. (1968). Learning for mastery. Evaluation Comment (UCLA-CSIEP), 1(2), 1-12.
- [7] Bonk, C.J. & Graham, C.R. (2006). The handbook of blended learning environments: Global perspectives, local designs. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass/Pfeiffer. p. 5.
- [8] Banditvilai, C. (2016). Enhancing students’ language skills through blended learning. The Electronic Journal of e.Learning Volume 14 Issue 3, p 220-229. Available online:  
<http://www.ejel.org/volume14/issue3/p223> (Accessed on 6 April 2023).

- [9] Arkorful, Valentina (2013). The role of e-learning, the advantages and disadvantages of its adoption in Higher Education in: 2013 IJER – International Journal of Education and Research. Available online: <https://www.ijern.com/E-learning.php> (Accessed on 6 April 2023).
- [10] Johnson, A. (2016). Designing ‘authenticity’ in digital learning environments. The Journal of Interactive Technology & Pedagogy (9), p. 11. Available online: <http://epubs.surrey.ac.uk/811176/1/Designing%20authenticity.pdf> (Accessed on 6 April 2023).
- [11] Luskin, B. (2010). Think “Exciting”: E-Learning and the Big “E”. EDUCAUSE Quarterly, 33(1), Available online: <http://www.educause.edu/EDUCAUSE+Quarterly/EDUCAUSEQuarterlyMagazineVolum/ThiExcitingELearningandtheBi/199372> (Accessed on 6 April 2023).
- [12] Parks E. (2012). What’s the “e” in e-Learning?  
Available online: <https://www.Askinternational.com> (Accessed on 6 April 2023).
- [13] Dugan Laird (1985). Approaches to Training and Development, Addison-Wesley, p. 25.
- [14] Craig, Robert. L (1996). The ASTD Training and Development Handbook, McGraw-Hill; 4<sup>th</sup> edition, p. 483.
- [15] Rogers, Carl. (1951). Client-Centered Therapy: Its Current Practice, Implications and Theory. London: Constable.
- [16] Geoff Rip (2021). Are you a Trainer or Facilitator, or Both. Available online: <https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/you-trainer-facilitator-both-geoff-rip#:~:text=According%20to%20two%20online%20dictionaries,be%20a%20facilitator%2C%20including%20trainers> (Accessed on 6 April 2023).
- [17] Facilitator vs Teacher: Promoting Learning Through Engagement October 20, 2022  
Available online: <https://soeonline.american.edu/blog/facilitator-vs-teacher/#:~:text=The%20main%20difference%20between%20facilitators,and%20help%20maximize%20their%20education> (Accessed on 6 April 2023).
- [18] Hook, Sidney (1976). “Morris R. Cohen – Fifty Years Later”. The American Scholar, Summer 1976, Vol. 45, no. 3.