Let Me Learn in the Well-Known Forum: Development of Writing Skill, Teaching Skills and Social Engagement Among Arab-Bedouin Female Students

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Abstract

This case study aims to explore whether active learning through an online forum in teacher training institutions can improve educational outcomes in Hebrew as a second language among Arabic-speaking Arab-Bedouin students. The research focuses on three main areas: enhancing written expression skills, acquiring teaching tools, and strengthening social and educational interactions within course environments.

The findings indicate that active participation in the online forum, supported by meaningful guidance from course instructors, significantly improved students' writing abilities, reinforced their pedagogical skills for classroom teaching, and deepened social interaction among learners. The research underscores the importance of effective pedagogical design in online courses that fosters active and enriching learning rather than solely content-based instruction.

Keywords: Arabic-speaking students, online educational forum, acquisition of teaching concepts, teaching tools, increased social engagement

1. Introduction

In today's academic landscape, online educational forums have become a core component of learning in higher education institutions. Studies indicate that computer-mediated writing closely resembles spoken language, where messages build on previous communications and allow for rapid response (Bahari, 2021). Digital communication technologies, now integral to academic routines, became crucial tools for addressing educational challenges during crises like the COVID-19 pandemic and the Israel-Gaza War in 2023.

The rapid adoption of online teaching methods in higher education institutions during the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020 and the Gaza conflict in 2023 highlighted the efficacy of online teaching, particularly for enhancing educational achievements in higher education. Online learning environments have emerged as relevant pedagogical spaces for academic instruction.

Research literature on teaching and learning in online environments primarily addresses online discussions, diverse teaching methods, and their effects on student performance (Yildiz & Keengwe, 2016). Studies globally identify two primary teaching styles in online settings: the academic style, focused on theoretical learning, and the professional style, emphasizing students' academic activities. These styles highlight instructors' pedagogical approaches in online environments and contribute to students' professional training (El-Sabagh, 2021).

However, research presents varying perspectives on the role of online educational forums. On one hand, the development of online courses and their associated communication technologies have made online learning environments more interactive, transforming students from mere knowledge consumers to active co-creators. These courses enable knowledge sharing and the creation of online study groups (Barak, Watted & Haick, 2016). On the other hand, online forum learning presents limitations, such as challenges in locating relevant information due to the open nature of tasks and the fact that forum content is student-generated. These limitations have often led to negative attitudes toward forum-based learning (Bahari, 2021).

To date, no studies have examined the pedagogical discourse of instructors in online environments and its impact on clinical experiences among Arab-Bedouin students, particularly during crises or wars. This study aims to investigate the

contribution of online forum learning within a teaching methods course for Bedouin students specializing in Hebrew as a second language and to assess the instructor's role in promoting this type of learning.

2. Literature Review: The Online Learning Forum in Academic Courses

The online learning forum in academic courses serves as a dedicated educational tool that reinforces theoretical concepts, enhancing student learning both in terms of knowledge acquisition and social interaction. Studies indicate a growing student preference for sourcing articles from online platforms, as online information retrieval is perceived as more efficient than traditional methods, such as library searches. Online information searches are characterized by competition, speed, and familiarity with digital databases (Bryson & Andres, 2020; Abu-Gweder & Solomovich, 2025).

Recent studies show that the learning environment provided by online forums fosters significant, sustained learning where knowledge is built and skills and attitudes are developed. This presents a substantial challenge for academia, as it requires adaptation both in teaching methods employed by academic staff and in the continuous use of online, interactive tools throughout the course (Marker, Gnambs & Appel, 2018).

Individuals engage with content in online learning forums differently than in other media, including traditional learning. Online reading allows learners to follow links, explore new resources, and leave the site in search of additional, focused content. Research shows that students' cognitive development is fostered through active participation in educational activities within a cultural context (Vygotsky, 1987).

The socio-educational aspect is significant in the teaching and learning processes within the forum, with recent studies indicating that online teaching methods enable meaningful learning that cultivates a new professional identity for students, promotes peer interaction, and shapes students' cognitive processes (Cohen & Davidovitch, 2020; Bryson & Andres, 2020).

Student assessment in courses relying on online learning forums, particularly in teacher training institutions, plays a crucial role in optimizing learning levels. Studies have examined the contribution of self-assessment and anonymous online peer evaluation to enhancing the quality of work submitted by education students and developing their evaluative skills. The findings show increased effort in understanding task requirements, preparing assignments, and overcoming the peer evaluation barrier, which further improved their peer assessment abilities (Wang, Lai & Hwang, 2015).

Contribution of the Online Learning Forum in Educational Research

The online learning forum's flexibility enables learning to take place in different locations and times, allows virtual study group meetings without the need for physical interaction, enriches ideas and information sharing, promotes peer learning, collaborative learning, critical thinking, information processing, and teamwork. The forum motivates learners, encourages critical thinking, and helps reduce anxiety associated with writing and language or social issues, especially among female teacher trainees (Liu et al., 2023; Tseng et al., 2023; Yin & Fitzgerald, 2015). Studies show that students recognize the importance of learning via the online forum as a meaningful learning environment, with most indicating that they would use it in their future roles as teachers or parents. Additionally, students' attitudes toward online expression changed, and they expressed greater willingness to participate online in ways they were unfamiliar with prior to the course. Developing an online learning unit by students leads to these changes in attitudes and improves their professional skills (Wang, Lai & Hwang, 2015).

However, research indicates that certain conditions are necessary for the success of learning through forums. The primary condition relates to the type of academic institution. Implementation strategies will vary between institutions according to their respective capacities, requiring institutional leaders to guide the necessary functional and cultural shifts for adaptation to the new reality. Additional conditions relate to the motivation and capability of teaching students. For example, students' ability to utilize online learning resources can be explained by their technological orientation; students with a natural inclination toward technological resources tend to make greater use of online learning networks.

Teachers play a crucial role in identifying literacy needs, guiding students to acquire essential skills for successful social integration. Therefore, recognizing digital readiness among teachers is particularly important. Studies show that online learning contributes to improving students' digital literacy and readiness in education majors. A unique study found that over half of the participants report a high general level of literacy across all fields, along with a high sense of readiness for teamwork and ethical preparedness (Usher, Barak & Haick, 2021).

3. Research Methodology

This study was conducted as part of a course under the lecturer's guidance, and therefore it can be classified as a case study (Shkedi, 2003). A case study focuses on firsthand accounts, where the researcher describes their experiences and interpretations, assuming a central role in the narrative. In this research, the course instructor had a profound

understanding of the learning process, enabling them to assess the broader context of learning and instructional interaction within the course.

The objective of the case study is to gain an in-depth understanding of the specific case rather than to generalize findings to wider phenomena (Hancock, Algozzine & Lin, 2021). Studies of this nature allow for insights into real educational issues (Yin, 2017; Wilson, 2017). In this instance, the research concentrated on analyzing learning activities in the course forum and assignments, examining student interactions.

The study relied on two main dimensions: the lecturer's observation of plenary presentations and interpretive reading of the submitted assignments. Data sources included course materials, such as assignments and presentations, and student responses in the online forum. Data analysis was conducted using qualitative interpretive tools (Creswell & Poth, 2018), with data preserved for verification. Qualitative methods of data collection and analysis supported the methodology, clarifying the findings.

Triangulation (Merriam, 2009; Patton, 2015) was used to establish the study's reliability by combining data sources such as transcripts, student responses, and reflections written at the end of the course. This integration of sources contributed to the validation of findings.

Research Process

During the practical experience, students engaged in teaching research assignments within an online course designed to deepen their understanding of various teaching concepts. Initially, they selected a significant teaching concept to research and present in the learning forum. They then introduced an essential teaching tool, sharing insights and critiques on their peers' concepts. Students participated in social interactions with the group within the learning forum to foster in-depth discussions on these topics.

In the second stage, after completing the learning and presentations, students wrote concluding feedback on the course, sharing their learning process, personal research, and the social interactions that developed throughout the course.

Research Population

The study population consisted of 18 Arab-Bedouin female undergraduate students in teacher training programs during the 2022-2023 academic years. The research focused on their written work and pedagogical tools adopted during the course, with particular emphasis on the use of the learning forum in crisis situations.

Ethics

The study used a convenience sampling method (Miles et al., 2014). The lecturer informed the students about the research, and they provided informed consent via email. Participation was voluntary, with measures taken to protect participant privacy and the confidentiality of the collected information.

Research Findings:

The current study explores the role of online learning forums among Arab-Bedouin students in higher education during times of crisis. Here are the main findings:

Acquisition of Teaching Concepts:

Studies highlight the necessity of effectively employing digital literacy components, with information literacy, or critical thinking about received knowledge, being particularly crucial. This study examined students' critical approach toward concepts acquired by their peers in the course. The educational forum demonstrated a preference for online academic courses, largely due to their capacity to provide students with flexible learning opportunities. Flexible learning acknowledges student diversity and allows varied degrees of choice in important study topics.

"The ability to select content that suits my personal level of interest makes learning more meaningful" (Samira).

"I feel like I'm not just receiving information, but choosing what is important and relevant for me" (Reem).

Responses from peers refined the concepts, linked them to schoolwork, requested examples, and offered teaching advice for the concepts. This indicates substantial utilization of flexibility in the course.

"The responses from my peers were very meaningful to me. They helped me understand the concepts more deeply and connected them to my work at school" (Fatima).

"They didn't just explain; they asked for practical examples and gave advice for teaching these concepts in the classroom" (Marwa).

"I feel I have fully utilized the option to choose relevant topics. The fact that I can focus on what's meaningful for me enhances my learning and links it directly to my role as a teacher" (Bayan).

These findings emphasize the importance of allowing content flexibility in courses, which supports individual learner needs and strengthens the link between learning and professional practice.

Regarding content consumption, a trend of linear learning throughout the course was noted; although the materials were accessible from the semester's start, most students followed a weekly progression.

"Even though the content was accessible from the beginning, I felt comfortable following the course's weekly order. It helped me stay on pace without overwhelming myself" (Rowan).

"I often revisit previous units to ensure I've understood the material properly; sometimes it helps with understanding new assignments" (Ramzia).

This finding may relate to the course structure, assignment integration, and academic workload. However, some students accessed previous or future units each week, indicating diverse learning speeds.

"I generally followed the course order, but sometimes I wanted to preview upcoming topics, especially ones that really interested me" (Yusra).

"The pressure from other courses made me study week by week, but I always revisited the material before tests or assignments" (Marram).

Additionally, significant activity occurred on the platform around assignment submission deadlines, with many accessing all learning units. This evidence supports partial flexibility utilization by students in an online course, where learners tailor the time, place, and mode of content consumption to their needs.

Development of Future Teaching Tools:

Participation in the online forum during the course involved dynamic, interactive activities in the online sessions. This research highlights the importance of collaborative learning mediated by technology through the forum as a meaningful learning environment. For example, students were asked to connect a relevant field of study and analyze it. They shared a range of resources, including current news articles, opinion pieces, videos, technological tools, and important posts. After choosing a tool, students supplemented it with learning materials such as research on the tool or presentations based on studies on teaching methods. The following quotes reflect the students' responses, which included explanations of course content and encouraged discussion on the subject. Part of the assessment was based on contributions to discussions, not only on sharing links.

"The forum allowed me to look for various materials and share them with my classmates. I posted an opinion article from the internet on a relevant topic and analyzed it based on what we learned in class. It helped me see the material from a different perspective and hear others' opinions" (Noura).

"I selected a technological tool that enables interactive information display and presented it in the forum with a presentation explaining how to use it in teaching. Additionally, I added research on the effectiveness of this tool in modern teaching methods" (Hiyam).

Studies show that the active presence of the course instructor, both through comments and availability, is vital for enhancing student work and directing them toward independent, high-quality work. In this study, the instructor's presence in the initial stages of uploading materials, guiding students, and especially in written comments in the forum, contributed significantly, including adjustments and directions in other students' responses. The pedagogical instructor's guidance and responsiveness greatly improved learning efficiency.

"The instructor's presence at the initial stage of uploading materials, guiding students, and especially in the forum comments, contributed significantly, including adding directions in other students' responses" (Yasmin).

"The instructor's guidance and responsiveness greatly improved learning efficiency. Their responses to students and examples of learning products and informative websites contributed to developing meaningful discussions in the course" (Layla).

Social Engagement:

Research literature highlights the challenges of incorporating online learning into higher education institutions, especially in teacher training institutions, as a means of increasing student engagement, creating a learning experience, and enriching academic study. The current study found that an interactive learning model increases student engagement. This method creates a positive learning experience, aids understanding of complex material, and encourages continuous engagement throughout the semester.

"The forum really helped me understand the material. The responses from classmates helped me think differently and understand things I missed before" (Riham).

Additionally, the collaboration among students in the course was beneficial. Forum discussions contributed greatly to their understanding, supporting recent research indicating a positive link between social media use and academic achievement.

"The forum collaboration made me feel like I wasn't alone. The discussions greatly enhanced my understanding, and I had the opportunity to ask questions at the right time" (Shorouq).

The forum served as a convenient platform for educational information exchange. Students received, read, responded to, revised, and reorganized learning products. They considered the instructor's comments and learned from them. The forum contributed to extensive peer learning, knowledge sharing, and mutual assistance among students. This knowledge accessibility is significant for students in their future careers, both academically and practically as teachers.

"The forum allowed us to exchange information easily; we received feedback from classmates and the instructor, learned from it, and were able to improve our own work" (Nermin).

"The knowledge sharing and mutual assistance in the forum greatly benefited us, especially as we prepare for teaching careers, where we will need these skills" (Huda).

4. Discussion

In this study, a case analysis was conducted on the use of an online learning forum within an academic course focused on teaching Hebrew as a second language for Arab-Bedouin teaching students in teacher training institutions in southern Israel. The objective was to examine the forum's contribution to enhancing pedagogical knowledge, equipping students with teaching tools for their professional future, and strengthening social ties among students. The academic literature highlights significant advantages of forums, including knowledge acquisition, increased flexibility, and fostering a socio-educational network (Usher, Barak & Haick, 2021; Castro & Tumibay, 2021). Our findings show that forum discussions, moderated by the instructor and involving peer interactions, contributed to fruitful discussions and a deeper understanding of the course material. This observation aligns with previous studies that emphasize the role of forum-based learning in fostering collaborative learning processes and extending pedagogical discourse (Wang, Lai & Hwang, 2015).

Further findings indicate that forum-based learning involved active real-time engagement, where students could share resources and engage in discussions based on prepared presentations and materials. This facilitated effective self-learning and enhanced collaboration among students and the instructor. Nonetheless, challenges associated with forum learning were noted, such as technical issues or less fluid interactions with the instructor, as documented in the literature (Cheng, Hwang & Lai, 2022). However, the current study reveals that using an online learning forum during a crisis, such as the "Sword of Iron" war, proved to be an effective tool for enhancing interaction and collaborative learning, particularly among Arab-Bedouin students facing challenging educational circumstances (Abu-Gweder, 2023, 2024). The research highlights the importance of providing flexible learning tailored to the diverse needs of students. This flexibility, coupled with intrinsic motivation, improved students' achievements and strengthened social bonds within the group (Knowles, Holton & Swanson, 2014). The online learning forum allowed instructors to closely monitor student progress and provide precise and targeted feedback, thereby encouraging collaborative and meaningful learning (Cheng, Hwang & Lai, 2022).

In summary, the study demonstrates that the online learning forum contributed to the students' personal and professional development, and the instructor's active presence throughout the course was a significant factor in fostering collaborative learning and knowledge-building. This positive experience may encourage the continued use of online learning forums in the future, granting students greater autonomy in organizing their learning.

5. Contribution of the Study

The contribution of this study is significant both theoretically and practically. Theoretically, it adds a valuable layer to understanding the development of online teaching in higher education in Israel, especially during times of crisis. Practically, the online learning forum substantially promoted student skills by making knowledge accessible through technology, creating substantial potential for meaningful learning, particularly during emergencies. For example, teaching students can apply the tools acquired in the course in their future roles as teachers. This stage in their teaching careers could pave the way for integrating meaningful processes within school culture, especially during crises. Future use of accessible repositories, such as summaries and writing and learning activities, can benefit students, teachers, and even parents. The Ministry of Education encourages the integration of technological initiatives, particularly when computerized tasks are assigned to students, and the online learning forum is a vital tool for learning beyond the classroom, especially in emergency situations.

6. Recommendations

Promoting flexible learning, enhancing pedagogical guidance, and fostering social collaboration are three key elements for the success of online academic courses. It is essential to continue integrating flexible learning, allowing students to

choose content and pace that suit them, facilitating personalized learning and improving achievement. Additionally, it is important to ensure the active presence of course instructors during the initial phases and throughout forum discussions, as this supports meaningful discussion development, provides direction for improvement, and empowers students' independent work. Furthermore, fostering social interactions among students in learning forums contributes to better academic performance, strengthens student-instructor relationships, and cultivates shared learning experiences that promote engagement and peer learning.

7. Limitations and Future Research

The purpose of this study was to examine whether learning through forums constitutes an active learning method that could revolutionize lecture and course content in teacher training institutions. However, this study focused on a single course in the professional training of teaching students and did not explore other areas such as general education. The course sample was also relatively small, with only 30 participating students. Future research involving a larger sample size could provide higher reliability.

Additionally, the study demonstrates that the educational model fosters applied learning through the increasing availability and diversity of online tools, particularly during health crises like the COVID-19 pandemic and conflicts such as the Israel-Gaza War of 2023. Future research could explore the opportunities and constraints of this model, as well as the procedures and strategies available for engaging students in times of crisis.

It would also be beneficial to examine whether these findings apply to other teaching domains and more diverse student populations. These limitations highlight the need for extensive, comprehensive research to understand the full impact of forum-based online learning in teacher training institutions.

In conclusion, this study underscores the importance of active learning through online technology in acquiring new teaching concepts, developing pedagogical tools, and enhancing social engagement among teaching students. Future research could focus on identifying tools and techniques that strengthen social and educational engagement, examining their impact on teachers' professional development, and reinforcing the connection between schools and communities.

Authors' Contributions

Dr. Aref Abu-Gweder was responsible for the study design, data collection.

Competing Interests

The authors declare that they have no known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have appeared to influence the work reported in this paper.

Informed consent

Obtained.

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The data that support the findings of this study are available on request from the corresponding author. The data are not publicly available due to privacy or ethical restrictions.

Data sharing statement

No additional data are available.

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