

A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF EDUCATORS' USE OF WEBINARS: IMPLICATIONS FOR ENGLISH FOR ACADEMIC PURPOSES COURSE

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- Introduction
- Methods and Methodologies
- Theoretical Framework
- Research Design
- Findings of the Empirical Research
- Conclusions and Prospects for Development

- English for Academic Purposes courses are being constantly modernised.
- One of the areas of modernisation implies use of **webinars**.
- **Webinars** have become an indispensable tool in ensuring **online educational environment** for closer inter-connections between students, educators, researchers and other participants of higher education including English for Academic Purposes courses.

- Against this background, **few studies** investigate how webinar tools can facilitate interaction in online educational environment.
- The **perceptions of student-trainers** who used webinar tools have been investigated (Wang, Hsu, 2008) as well.
- **Educators' experience in use of webinars** has been analysed (Ahrens, Zaščerinska, Melnikova, Ramar, Clipa, Andreeva, 2015).
- **However**, implications for use of webinars in English for Academic Purposes courses have not been elaborated.

- The **guiding research question** is as follows:
 - What are implications for use of webinars in English for Academic Purposes courses?
- **The aim of the article** is
 - to analyse educators' use of webinars
 - underpinning elaboration of a hypothesis on use of webinars in English for Academic Purposes courses.
- **Interdisciplinary research:**
 - English Teaching/Learning and
 - Information and Communication Technologies.
- The **methodology** of the present scientific research:
 - English for Academic Purposes courses → webinars → an empirical study within a multicultural environment → conclusions.

- **Definitions of English for Academic Purposes:**
 - A **branch** of English Teaching/Learning (Hutchinson, Waters, 1994),
 - Communication **skills** required for study purposes in formal educational systems (Jordan, 1997),
 - **Joint activity/process** (Zascerinska, 2013),
 - **A course** in formal higher education institution.
- **A course is** a method and form in formal higher education.
- **A course** is a period of study at a university that leads to an exam or a qualification (Oxford Learners' Dictionaries).
- A course may employ Information and Communication Technologies including **webinars** that serve as an **innovative technology** within English for Academic Purposes course

Theoretical Framework (2)

- **Webinar** is a tool that provides computer mediated communication.
- In comparison to other computer mediated communication tools, webinar is able to transmit **video, audio, and images**, webinar also enables users to share applications and to use whiteboard, the objective being to exchange information in a real-time and two-way format (Wang, Hsu, 2008).
- Webinar creates opportunities for both educators and learners to experience **different levels of interaction online**, and these opportunities are essentially different from other communication approaches such as discussion-board postings and e-mails (Wang, Hsu, 2008).

- There are **five advantages of using the webinar** tool to facilitate communication between two sites (Wang, Hsu, 2008):
 1. Webinar tool is **affordable** (de Gara & Boora, 2006). Users can participate in a webinar session with a computer, video/audio capture devices, and broadband network connections.
 2. Webinar tool enables **synchronous communication**. Instructors can communicate with the learners in a synchronous format to provide immediate feedback to learners (Hotcomm, 2003).



3. Webinar tool facilitates **real-time multimedia demonstrations**. Instructors can share the application on the presenter's site with all participants.

4. Webinar tool facilitates **multi-level interaction**. Instructors can lecture, interact with the audience, facilitate participant group collaboration in a real-time format (Marjanovic, 1999), and designate certain participants to be in charge of the sessions.

5. Webinar tool provides an environment in which participants can **archive seminar content for personal review** or for people who missed the real-time session.

- **Experience** includes (Zaščerinska, 2013)
 - knowledge,
 - skills and
 - attitude.
- The terms *experience* and *competence* are used **synonymously** in pedagogy (Ahrens, Zaščerinska, 2015).
- The elements of competence, namely **knowledge, skills and attitude, are inter-related** (Ahrens, Zaščerinska, 2015).

- **Guiding question:**
 - What is educators' use of webinars in higher education?
- The empirical study was carried out in September 2015.
- The **sample** of the empirical study involved six educators from different countries.
- **Explorative research** has been used in the empirical study (Mayring, 2007, 6).
- **Interpretive** research paradigm
- The **semi-structured interview** with the following question:
 - How do you use webinars in higher education?

Study Results: Germany (1)

- Universities in Germany are provided with **webinar platforms by German Research Council**.
- Use of webinars with **distance students** for discussing preparation of students' term papers, bachelor or master thesis.
- It should be noted that by distance students, part-time (mostly during weekend) students **from the geographical areas that differ from the university location** are meant.
- The distance students usually **combine working in a company and university studies**.

Study Results: Germany (2)

- During a day the distance students work in a company and are able to **join a webinar in their free time** which mostly is available in the evening hours from 6pm to 9pm.
- For distance students, it is **not so easy to concentrate on a scientific discussion via a webinar** in the evening after a working day.
- Further on, scientific discussions on preparation of term papers, bachelor or master thesis with distance students via **webinars extend educators' working hours** as well.

Study Results: Latvia (1)

- Educator participates as a **presenter as well as a listener in webinars in non-formal or non-institutionalized higher education.**
- An **advantage** is that a **webinar can be recorded and seen later as many times as one wishes.**
- As a **disadvantage** the educator highlighted that a webinar **presenter has to take his/her body language, face expression, hairstyle and many other things** into consideration before and during a webinar to keep listeners' attention.
- Another **disadvantage** is that the **presenter does not see a listener or listeners** thereby the presenter does not know whether a listener is following a webinar.

- Another **issue** is that webinars in non-formal higher education educators are interested to take part in are held in the evenings so **time slot for a webinar in non-formal higher education is difficult to negotiate between the participants**. Hence, educators participate in a webinar not during their working hours.
- Participation in a webinar sometimes depends on **the Internet connectivity and speed**, too:
 - These technical issues affect the presentation flow.
 - **Transmission delay** and audio or video disconnection halts webinars.
 - **Video transmission** of the presenter becomes a distraction when participants are focusing on the presentation.

Study Results: Lithuania (1)

- Webinars have not yet become usual in the study process.
- However, the **technical possibilities for Webinars are provided by University Distance Learning system (Moodle)** and lecturers are fostered to use this system in teaching-learning processes.
- Therefore one of the relevant issues is **competence of lecturers** to organize and implement webinar-based education or even just to use webinars an alternative to academic lecture.
- Research participants stressed that they **haven't received any training** on how to organize webinars, how to work with audience, how to present materials, etc.

Study Results: India (1)

- **Webinar** tools are used **for**
 - the learning puposes
 - sharing the individual perceptions on various social issues which are commonly discussed.
- During conferences, the students are directed to get engaged in the webinar connectivity that is confined within the **regional territory as different states in India are of different languages and cultures**.
- In our classrooms the webinar is theoretically taught as the practicum related to **webinar is not fully stressed in the curricular structure of the university** and this lacuna much relised now.

Study Results: Romania (1)

- Educator has not so much experience in use of webinars but the **educator is very interested** in this subject.
- Implementation of ICT in the educational settings such as universities could bring out the **pedagogical point of view**.
- The major changes in the education field will be in rapport **between formal and informal training** and integration of learning styles to the new technologies.
- **This innovation** in the technologies field **influences** the **educational process**.

Study Results: Russia (1)

- Educator has no experience in use of webinars in higher education yet.
- But is willing to start to use it if shown how.
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- Summarizing content analysis (Mayring, 2004) of the data reveals that **educators' experience in use of webinars in higher education is heterogeneous.**
- **Advantages:**
 - a webinar can be recorded and seen later by both educator and student as many times as one wishes. Educators' re-watching the webinar can help learn an **efficient management of webinars in higher education** that includes time management, group controlling, linguistic performance, cultural adoption, educators' appearance, room decoration, etc.
 - educators' **faster assistance** during students' preparation of their term papers, bachelor or master thesis.

- **Disadvantages:**
 - a webinar presenter has to take his/her **body language, face expression, hairstyle and many other things** into consideration before and during a webinar to keep listeners' attention.
 - the **presenter does not see a listener or listeners** thereby the presenter does not know whether a listener is following a webinar.
 - As well as webinars in higher education are mostly held **not during normal working hours from 9am to 5pm.**
 - Participation in a webinar depends on the **Internet connectivity and speed**, too.

- The empirical findings of the research allow drawing the conclusions on **educators' heterogeneous experience in use of webinars in higher education.**
- The following **hypothesis** has been formulated: use of webinars in English for Academic Purposes courses is successful if the curricular framework is much focused towards
 - individualization of learning content,
 - webinars as a shared value between educators and students,
 - closer inter-connections between formal, non-formal and informal teaching/learning,
 - creation of educational scenarios with use of webinars,
 - recognition of webinars within English for Academic Purposes courses,
 - **certification of training for teachers.**

- Limitations of the present research:
 - The inter-connections between **webinars, educator and English for Academic Purposes courses** have been set.
 - Another limitation is the empirical study conducted by involving the **educators only**.

- Further research tends to focus on **empirical studies** to compare students and educators' use of webinars in English for Academic Purposes courses.
- The search for **relevant methods for evaluation** of the use of webinars in English for Academic Purposes courses is proposed.
- And a **comparative research of more countries** could be carried out, too.

Thank you for your attention!

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