Transition to a Hybrid Course: Strategies for Implementation

Hala Tawfik, Rania El Khayat
Misr International University (Egypt)

Abstract

Integrating technology and specifically online learning in university studies is no longer a luxury; it has become essential in this IT-dominated age. Online learning helps students gain many skills required for the highly competitive job market of the 21st century. It allows them to become independent learners in addition to giving them more flexibility in the way they wish to learn. Therefore it was paramount to introduce courses that have at least some online component. In September 2008, the English Language Program, Misr International University, decided to transform Freshman II, the final course in the University's Writing Program, into a hybrid course which merges face-to-face instruction and online learning. This online component is intrinsic to the course and not just an addition.

The purpose of this paper is to assess this transition and to identify the strengths and weaknesses after 4 years of implementation. The research focuses on analyzing the feedback from both students and instructors. Feedback from students was particularly important since a large portion of our student body comes from a non-IT background and this presented several challenges. Egyptian students are by nature dependent on their instructors, always looking for face-to-face instruction and guidance. Consequently, this served as a great leap for them. For instructors, the change in the course facilitated the process of evaluation of the students' work and minimized cases of plagiarism. It also gave instructors flexibility in time and class management. The paper finally addresses the results and recommendations and possible future applications to other courses in the program. The paper aims to provide a framework for institutions wishing to implement similar changes in their program.