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Title:
**An Investigation of the Major Challenges Encountered by
EFL Teachers and their Impact on EFL Students’
Academic Performance in Distance Education in Algeria.
The Case of the English Language Branch at Mohamed Kheider University
of Biskra.**

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Dedication

This study is dedicated to the six-year-old me, YOU DID IT CHAMP!

To my beloved parents, who have been my source of inspiration, strength, and motivation,
who continually provide their moral, spiritual, and emotional support.

To my brothers and sisters who were able to handle my mood swings throughout the journey
of this study.

To my friends and classmates, namely Issam M, Djamel C, Aladdin D, Younes S, Maissa B,
and Maro H, for their full support and their words of advice and encouragement.

Declaration

I, **Mohamed Laid DAMBRI**, do hereby declare that this submitted work is my original work and has not previously been submitted for any institution or university for a degree. I also declare that a list of references is provided forward indicating all the sources of the cited and quoted information. This work was certified and completed at Mohamed Khider University of Biskra.

Algeria.

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Abstract

Technology has given language instructors enormous opportunities to utilize online platforms and tools to improve learners' language competence in difficult situations like the COVID-19 epidemic. As a result of the advancement of learning technology, EFL teachers are faced with a variety of challenges in language instruction. This study investigates the challenges that EFL instructors and students experience while using online teaching during the Coronavirus epidemic, particularly in Algeria. In achieving the goals of this study, five (05) EFL teachers who teach in the English Branch of Mohamed Khider University of Biskra participated in the study, as well as fifty (50) EFL students from the same branch. Algerian universities have been closed to prevent the side-effects of the virus. This research is an exploratory mixed-methods research whereby questionnaire and interviews were used to explore the teachers' challenges in online education and their impact on students' academic performance. This research focused on the four research questions; what are the major challenges encountered by Algerian EFL teachers in remote language learning during Coronavirus pandemic? What is the impact of these challenges on students' academic performance? What are the problems faced by EFL students? And is online language learning a real alternative to face-to-face education. The findings indicated that EFL teachers encountered several challenges such as time management, a lack in learners' engagement and motivation, technological illiteracy, administrative problems, and gadget-related challenges. Aside from that, the results from students' questionnaire agreed with teachers' interview. EFL students also encountered similar challenges such as the lack of variety in language learning materials, the distraction at home, trouble with the Internet flow, the access to e-learning platforms, and they find remote learning tedious and monotonous due to the lack of interaction between their peers and their teachers. Moreover, based on the data gathered from both tools employed in this study, the aforementioned challenges had a significant negative impact on students' academic performance; i.e., their language proficiency has decreased after the shift to distance language learning.

Keywords: Distance education, EFL learning, challenges, academic performance, Covid-19 pandemic.

List of Abbreviations and Acronyms

EFL: English as a Foreign Language

E-Learning: Electronic Learning

DDL: Distance Language Learning

RL: Remote Learning

FL: Foreign Language

COVID-19: Corona Virus Disease 2019

ICT: Information and Communication Technology

Moodle: Modular Object-Oriented Dynamic Learning Environment

Q: Question

T: Teacher

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الملخص

General Introduction

Introduction

Language learning and teaching is currently regarded as a fascinating subject all around the world. Despite the fact that English teaching and learning has faced several challenges and issues over the years, EFL instructors have played a critical role in generating significant curricular innovation that may assist overcome these difficulties. In today's modern world, English language materials have mostly used technology to improve the learning and teaching environment and address potential problems. Several language materials have implemented new technologies, such as online platforms and software (Yedov, Gupta, & Khateapal, 2018).

Despite all of the downsides and issues associated with utilizing technology to teach English, online classrooms can be convenient in unpredictable situations such as the COVID-19 pandemic, which has not yet to be researched in the literature of EFL teaching and learning. The recent phenomenon, the Coronavirus pandemic, has changed the educational sector throughout the world, forcing schools and institutions to close and restrict face-to-face education for some time. As a result, technology integration is important during this time to allow educators interact with students and continue the teaching and learning process in both underdeveloped and developed countries.

Several instructors were able to pursue the educational process and avoid the need to extend the academic year by using online platforms, such as Moodle. However, numerous concerns have been raised regarding how technology deployment may present problems for instructors and students. As a result, the purpose of this study is to investigate the major challenges that professors encountered when using online classrooms during Covid-19 pandemic. This study sought to investigate the EFL teachers' challenges in the process of online teaching and explore the impact of these challenges on EFL students' academic performance during Coronavirus pandemic in Algeria.

1. Statement of the Problem

The COVID-19 pandemic began in Wuhan, China in December 2019 and spread quickly within months around the world. All aspects of life, including education, were affected by the pandemic. The global lockdown resulted in a suspension of educational institutions as the crisis deteriorated (Khalil et al., 2020). This closure of schools, colleges and universities led to a stressful event with very few options for educational administration (UNESCO, 2020). Consequently, there has been an unpredictable shift from traditional language learning to an alternative that only involves digital teaching and learning. Algerian EFL teachers and students were unprepared for this sudden change. Thus, instructors encountered several challenges. As a result, EFL students experienced problems that impaired their academic performance while studying online.

Therefore, the current study investigates the fundamental challenges encountered by EFL teachers and students at University Mohamed Khider of Biskra during the Coronavirus epidemic, as well as the influence these challenges had on students' academic performance, or language proficiency.

2. Significance of the Study

The findings of this study will redound to the benefit of the following:

- **Algerian EFL Teachers:** The findings of this study will assist Algerian EFL teachers in identifying the main obstacles and issues in online language instruction, as well as how these challenges and issues affect students. The researchers will not only identify the issues, but also offer practical and effective methods to address them based on literature.
- **Algerian EFL Students:** Similarly, the findings of this study will also highlight the problems faced by EFL student, which will help teachers address them in order to fulfil their needs.

3. Research Questions

This study aims to answer the following questions:

- ❖ What are the major challenges encountered by Algerian EFL teachers in distance language learning?
- ❖ What is the impact of the challenges faced by EFL teachers on students' academic performance in distance language learning?
- ❖ What are the major issues faced by Algerian EFL students in remote language learning?
- ❖ Is distance language learning a real alternative to face-to-face language learning?

4. Hypotheses

On the basis of our research questions, we suggest the following hypotheses:

- ❖ We hypothesize that Algerian EFL teachers encounter challenges/difficulties in distance language learning.
- ❖ We hypothesize that the challenges faced by EFL teachers have a significant impact on students' academic performance in DLL.
- ❖ We hypothesize that Algerian EFL students face several issues in DLL.
- ❖ We hypothesize that DDL is less effective than traditional face-to-face language learning.

5. Research Methodology

Since the goal of this present study is to investigate and identify the major challenges that EFL teachers and students encounter in DDL, as well as their impact on learners' academic performance, the researchers decided that a mixed-methods approach (quantitative and qualitative approaches) would be more suitable because it serves the nature of the study. More significantly, the chosen method allows the researchers to learn about the attitudes of Algerian teachers and learners about e-learning in the Algerian educational system.

6. Literature Review

The following brief overview of literature highlights the importance and relevance of our research work from a theoretical perspective of the available published research works regarding the implementation of distance language learning as an alternative to face-to-face language learning during the covid-19 pandemic outbreak throughout the world.

Susilowati (2020) asserted that learning activities cannot be postponed since this would demotivate students and disrupt their learning rhythm. During this epidemic, it is the government's responsibility to establish new regulations so that learning activities may continue to be done safely. Meanwhile, all educational practitioners, instructors, and lecturers should be prepared to adapt their teaching plans to online learning, which will be the preferred method of learning throughout the Covid-19 epidemic. The selection of technical equipment, platforms, and materials should not place additional strain on the students (p.71).

Susilowati made a solid argument on improving students' language listening skills. She claims that, after technological tools and materials, the strategy employed is the next most significant consideration. Because time and internet connection are limited, professors can employ an approach in which students are encouraged to study independently and critically through the use of WhatsApp listening records. If the maximum amount of learning cannot be attained in each meeting, listening logs can be a good alternative because students will have more time to learn and practice independently at home.

According to Rosalina et al., (2020) there are three aspects to the issues that teachers face when it comes to online learning in the Coronavirus epidemic era. They are the supporting facilities such as internet access, a device, and a budget. Then preceded by the learning process such as the engagement, the explanation, the generation gap between teachers and learners, and the way to control students also the challenges to create an effective climate towards the process.

Similarly, Anita et al., (2020) claim that there is a conflict between five levels of involvement and five related variables of online learning processes. Learners, teachers' past exposure to online learning, technological competence, pedagogical understanding, and the support system are the five components. Teachers in this study were still having trouble improving the quality of their students' online learning engagement. Nonetheless, these teachers had great hopes that they would be able to improve their competence and professional practices as a result of a growing knowledge of the inadequacies of their online learning delivery and a reinvigorated sense of dedication.

Additionally, Subekti (2021) believes there are three aspects affecting effective online learning, which were insufficient supporting infrastructures or facilities, teachers' limited pedagogical skills in handling online learning, and the lack of teacher-student and student-student social connections during the learning process. It was discovered two recognized good practices: teachers' knowledge of learners' struggles shown in their facilitating activities, and the mix of synchronous and asynchronous modes, which could relieve learners' burden and increase learning effectiveness.

Lastly, Yunus et al., (2021) suggest that, despite the potential to learn new technology, the problems faced by prospective teachers outweighed the benefits in the long run. The lack of prior experience in the field of virtual education, as well as their teacher education program's lack of preparation and likely lack of knowledge from both school instructors and university supervisors, may have all contributed to making this experience more difficult and stressful.

Chapter One: Online Learning

Introduction

Algeria, like the rest of the world, has been affected by the Coronavirus pandemic. Several decisions were taken by policymakers as a consequence of its effect on societal, political, health and educational systems. The suspension of education in all its stages was among the crucial decisions that were taken. This decision took place in Algeria starting from the first half of March 2020. Thus, remote education through the Internet was implemented as an alternative to face-to-face by the Algerian Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research. Several questions have been raised about the success of this decision due to the anticipation of many obstacles that the university system may face while studying online. Home quarantine protocols were an opportunity for about 1.25 million university students to engage remotely with professors and colleagues through online platforms such as: Moodle, SNDL, CERIST, and ASJP. These platforms, in addition to other online services, such as Zoom, Google Meet, Skype, Whatsapp, and Adobe Connect were programmed for all academic levels and in all scientific fields in order to remedy and compensate the missed lectures and activities at the Algerian universities after the unpredictable suspension decision due to the health crisis situation (Mazouz et al., 2020).

In view of the above, the present chapter aims at clarifying the concept of online learning, and attempts to shed light on its types and advantages and disadvantages. Additionally, it endeavors to identify the relationship between online learning and language teaching. Accordingly, it will try to review some thorough definitions of online learning, along with a focus on its relation with language teaching/learning particularly in English language development.

1.1 The Concept of online learning

Online learning as a concept and as a term has continuously been a subject of education research for over twenty years. In this chapter, we present findings from systematic literature review for the definitions of online learning.

“E-learning is to take a course online using a modem, wireless, or cable connection to access academic course material from a computer, phone, or handheld device” (Governors State University, 2008, as cited in Sangrà et al., 2012). According to this definition, the author emphasizes mainly the technological aspects of online learning. The concept of this definition illustrates online learning as the use of technology for learning purposes. In this same context, Guri-Rosenblit (2005, as cited in Sangrà et al., 2012) defines online learning as “The use of electronic media for a variety of learning purposes that range from add-on functions in conventional classrooms to full substitution for the face-to face meetings by online encounters.” After reading this concept, we find that the author emphasizes the involvement of technology in order to accomplish various aspects of learning. To sum up, we cannot define online learning without mentioning the aspect of technology as it allows students to get access to the online classes in the first place.

From a different perspective, online learning is considered by numerous scholars to be a medium for communication, engagement, and cooperation and assigns secondary roles to its other aspects and functionality. A significant example of this, the definition of the Ministry of Communication and Technology of New Zealand (2008, as cited in Sangrà et al., 2012), “E-learning is defined as learning facilitated by the use of digital tools and content that involves some form of interactivity, which may include online interaction between the learner and their teacher or peers.” A similar definition of the latter is the definition provided by Bermejo (2005, as cited in Sangrà et al., 2012) indicates that “Online Learning is education that uses computerized communication systems as an environment for communication, the

exchange of information and interaction between students and instructors.” As a conclusion, the aspects of communication and interaction between learners and instructors are crucial in online learning.

In agreement with Tao et al (2006), online learning is modern learning environment based on electronic networks that has encouraged university students to gain individualized assistance and to provide learning plans that are more appropriate for them and different from other students. This encourages a high degree of interaction and teamwork between educators or teachers and peers compared to traditional learning environments.

Therefore, from the aforementioned definitions of online learning, it can be inferred that it is difficult to identify a standard concept for online learning. Some of the scholars refer to e-learning as only offering full online classes, while web-supplemented and web-dependent resources for the provision of instructional and support processes are included. All in all, we can agree that online learning is purely based on the involvement of technology in learning to fulfil its purposes.

1.2.1 Types of Online Learning

There are various ways in which the types of online learning are classified. There are some classifications which are based on the amount of the students’ interaction. Other classifications depend on the timing of interaction. Algahtani (2011) divided online learning into two types computer-based and the internet-based online learning.

1.2.2 The Computer-based Online Learning

According to Algahtani (2011), Computer-based learning requires the use of a wide range of widely accessible hardware and software for the use of information and communication technologies, and each part can be used in two ways: computer-managed instruction and computer-assisted-learning. In computer assisted-learning, according to him, computers are used as an alternative to the traditional approaches in teaching by offering immersive apps as an assisting tool inside the classroom or as a tool for self-learning outside the classroom. However, computers are used in computer-managed instruction to store and retrieve information in order to help in the administration of learning.

1.2.3 The internet-based Online Learning

Internet-based learning is a further enhancement of computer-based learning and allows material accessible on the Internet with links to relevant information sources, such as e-mail services and references that could be used by learners at any time and location, as well as the availability or absence of teachers or instructors. This type provides the value of instantaneous feedback. The asynchronous mode also allows students to communicate with instructors or teachers at different times over the internet, as well as with each other (Almosa, 2001).

1.3 Online Learning and Language Teaching

There are a range of online teaching technologies available, however, sometimes, they present a lot of challenges. These challenges and concerns related to digital technologies vary from installing errors, downloading problems, login issues, audio and video issues, and so on. Sometimes students find online teaching to be boring and unengaging. Students want two-way interaction which sometimes gets difficult to implement. Mediocre course content is also

a major issue. Students feel that the lack of community, technical problems, and difficulties in understanding instructional goals are the major barriers for online learning (Dhawan, 2020).

1.3.1 Online Teaching

Online teaching requires proper preparation, and the resulting design of the course should be creative and should enable learners to engage with each other and the materials (Porter, 2004). On the one hand, it is claimed by Hall et al. (2001) that seven components compose the framework for web-based learning design: directionality, usability, consistency, interactivity, multimodality, adaptability, and accountability. They suggest that successful design starts with explicit delineation of the target audience, context of use, aims of learning, and that all further design takes place in the context of the aforementioned variables. On the other hand, Clarke and Hermens (2001) argued that online learning is student-centered because learners can control their own pace of learning, and the activities could be adaptable to best suit the preferred style of learning of students. Online learning offers opportunities for active learning (Dolence & Norris, 1995). Furthermore, Students have the ability to engage in discussions, to voice their views and to share their expertise freely using good online learning platforms or apps, regardless of classroom size and time (Harasim, Calvert & Groeneboer, 1997).

1.3.2 Online Learning and its Relation to Language Teaching

In language learning context, online learning is there for learners in a manner where they can use it differently depending on their particular needs or as a way to develop formal education; that is, it is used as an alternative learning environment integrated into formal teaching. In reality, online learning provides more interactive possibilities and varied audio-

visual aids that allow learners to practice the language they are learning and to involve learners in more online learning activities (Gluchmanova, 2015).

The results of other researchers strongly show that the mindset of learners towards online learning is critical in making use of online learning. The effectiveness of the online learning process relies on the efforts and behaviors of the learners, or, in other words, the effectiveness of online learning is actually related to the effectiveness of its participants (Gluchmanova, 2015).

1.4 Advantages and Disadvantages of Online Learning

There are several advantages of using e-learning in education, in particular for higher education institutions, and, with the several advantages and benefits, online learning is considered as/to be one of the most effective methods in education (Algahtani, 2011). According to several researchers, one of the advantages of e-learning is the ability to concentrate on the interests of particular students. In his book review on e-learning strategies for delivering knowledge in the modern age, Marc (2000) observed that one of the strengths of e-learning in education is its focus on the needs of individual learners as an important element in the educational process.

1.4.1 Advantages

These are some of the advantages of e-learning implementation in education obtained by literature review:

1. When problems of time and place are taken into account, it is flexible. Any student has the choice of choosing the place and time that is most suitable for him or her. According to Smedley (2010), the adoption of e-learning provides institutions, as well as their students or learners, with a great deal of versatility in terms of when and where learning material is provided or obtained.

2. Through ease of access to a huge amount of information, e-learning increases the effectiveness of expertise and qualifications.
3. It is able to provide opportunities through the use of discussion platforms for relationships between learners. By doing so, e-learning helps to minimize obstacles to engagement, such as the anxiety of communicating with other students. Students are encouraged to communicate with one another through e-learning, as well as to share and appreciate various points of view.
4. E-learning saves money because it reduces the need for students or learners to travel. It is also cost-effective because it provides learning opportunities to a large number of people without needing a large number of buildings.
5. E-learning aims to compensate for university staff gaps, including instructors or teachers, facilitators, laboratory technicians, etc.
6. E-learning often takes into account the variations between different learners. For example, some learners tend to focus on certain aspects of the course, while others are prepared to study the whole course.

Holmes and Gardner (2006) summarized the above-mentioned advantages of online learning by explaining that the capacity of e-learning to evaluate students and their learning as they study, while also enhancing their educational experiences interactivity through interactive learning, cultural diversity, globalization, and eradicating boundaries of place and time (Holmes and Gardner, 2006).

1.4.2 Disadvantages

Despite the benefits of online learning when implemented in education, it may have some disadvantages. Among the studies that have identified the disadvantages of online learning is the study conducted by Zhao et al. (2015) where the authors discussed the following points:

1. As a form of education, online learning causes learners to experience contemplation, isolation, and a loss of connection or interaction. To minimize such impact, it is essential to provide a high level of motivation and time management skills.
2. Online learning can have a negative influence on the development of a learner's communication skills. Learners may have outstanding intellectual expertise, but they may lack the necessary skills to communicate the knowledge to others.
3. Piracy, plagiarism, cheating, inadequate selection skills, and improper use of copy and paste can all occur in online learning.
4. Online learning can have a negative impact on socialization skills and reduce the position of teachers as instructional process directors.
5. Since e-learning examinations and exams are often supervised by computer, controlling or regulating behaviors such as cheating can be challenging, if not impossible.

1.5 Online Learning Platforms

For decades, people have held classes without computers or the Internet, at least in several cases: chalk, blackboard, and markers have been the most popular teaching tools, and the actual presence of teachers has been inextricably linked with the notion of education. Growth and technological advancement, on the other hand, have had a significant impact on teaching techniques and classroom experiences (Wang, 2014). In modern education, online

learning tools are quite significant. However, until the covid-19 epidemic, they were underrepresented in educational institutions. The researcher will highlight the most commonly utilized distance learning systems in this regard (Moodle, Zoom Meetings, and Google Meet)

1.5.1 Moodle

Modular Object-Oriented Dynamic Learning Environment is an acronym for Moodle. Moodle is free to use under the provisions of the GNU General Public License (GPL), and there are no licensing fees (Brandle, 2005)

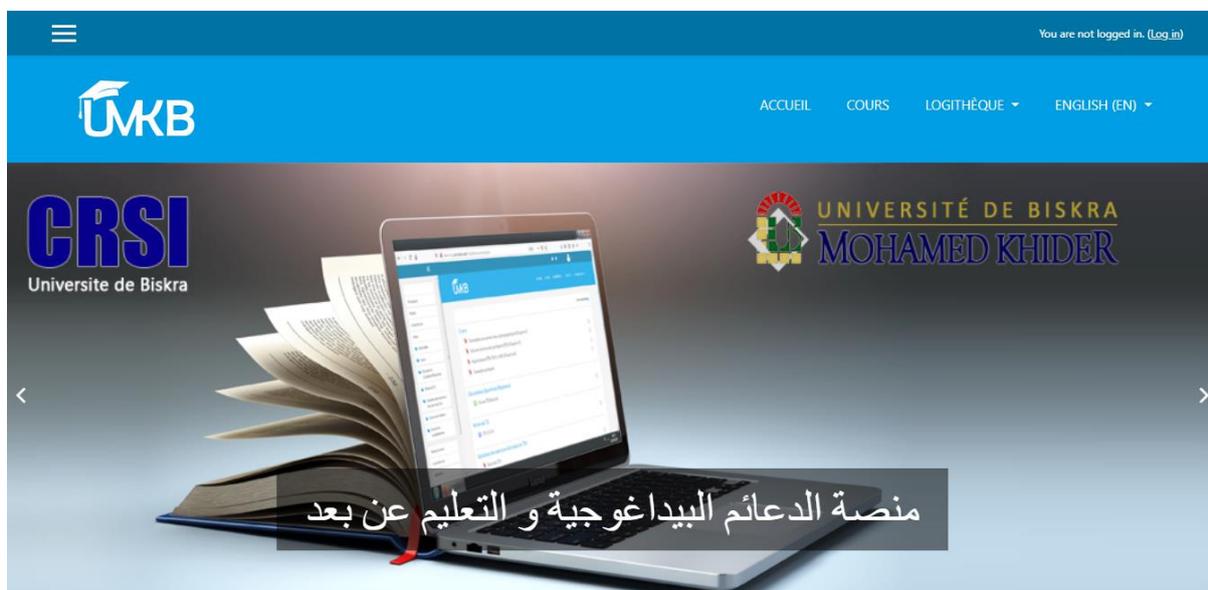


Figure 1.1: A screenshot of the Moodle platform of University of Biskra

Moodle, according to Marçais (2002), is an application that allows the classroom to be extended into the internet. This application provides a central location for students to access a variety of instructional resources. Teachers may use Moodle to publish news, give and collect assignments, and upload electronic journals and materials, and it operates on Windows, Mac OSX, Linux, and Unix.

1.5.2 Zoom Platform

The online educational platform Zoom has contributed to introduce a variety of improvements into foreign language learning. The broad use of methods, activities and tools of computer assisted language learning enabled several teachers all over the world to improve their teaching and optimize learning possibilities for their students. Luckily, more and more universities and households now have computers and Internet access, allowing for technology-assisted learning (Guzacheva, 2020).

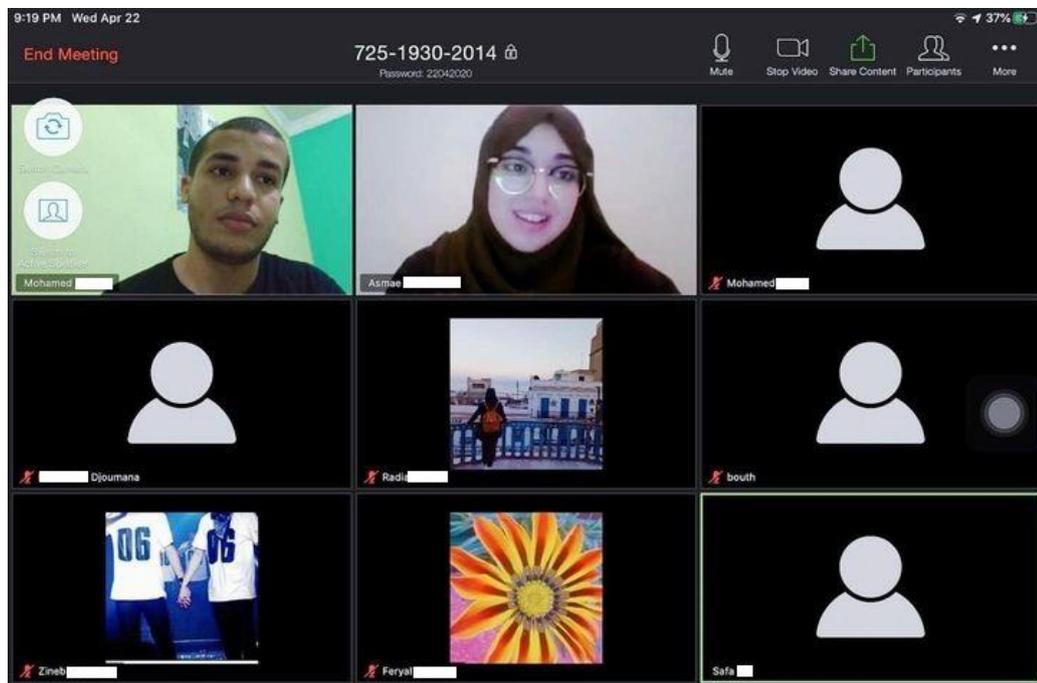


Figure 1.2: A screenshot of synchronous instruction in Zoom platform

Zoom's features allow English teachers to study and evaluate the four skills through rich interactions with EFL students. In addition to screen sharing, Zoom enables English teachers to annotate their shared screen, making classes more engaging. EFL students can record and turn recording on and off as frequently as they wish during a class if the teacher allows it. Teachers can record lessons and analyze them afterwards to assess students'

strengths and weaknesses, while students can use recorded lessons to assess their own abilities.

1.5.3 Google Meet

The extraordinary effort of educators and school leaders throughout the world, who seek to adapt as schools shift to remote learning has inspired Google's team. Despite school closures, G Suite for Education is used by 120 million students and educators throughout the world to create, collaborate, and communicate. One recurring topic they have heard as a result of the growth in usage is that educators are looking for ways to continue teaching and working in a safe and secure virtual environment (Yeskel, 2020).

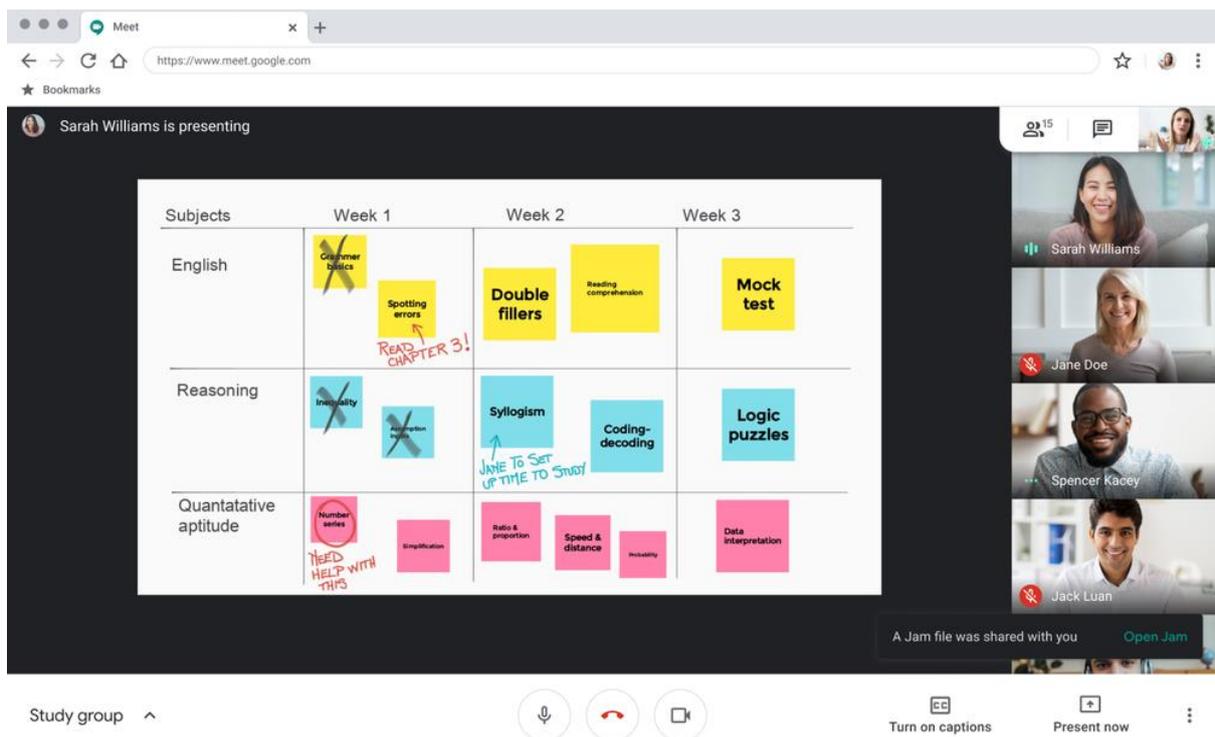


Figure 1.3: A screenshot of students during a class in Google Meet.

According to Sanako (2020) Teachers may use Google Meet to not only exchange files and activities with students, but also to gather their work in a logical manner. Teachers may also use the learning management platform to grade and modify materials. If both

students and teachers utilize Google Suite products simultaneously, it may be much more convenient.

Conclusion

The use of digital platforms for teaching and studying is called online learning, or e-learning. It makes use of technical resources to allow students to study whenever and wherever they choose. It entails teaching, knowledge delivery, and feedback. It encourages students to engage with one another, share ideas, and appreciate the viewpoints of others. Online learning promotes interaction and reinforces the connections that allow learning. Regardless of the difficulties and challenges mentioned above, the literature has attempted to understand the position of online learning in particular, as well as how it has influenced teaching and learning. Its implementation in some universities has resulted in improved knowledge access for faculty and students. However, its success in third world countries is debatable due to several factors which will be discussed in details in the second chapter.

Chapter Two:

Teachers' Challenges and Students' Problems in Distance Learning.

Introduction

In the midst of the covid-19 pandemic, several higher education teachers, and EFL teachers specifically were obliged to pivot their instruction, yet with respecting the health protocol to allow teaching and learning to continue. This unpredictable shift from face-to-face learning to an alternative that only involves digital teaching and learning has resulted in numerous challenges for both participants of the learning process. On the one hand, EFL teachers encountered several challenges such as identifying students' learning styles in e-learning and adopting teaching strategies that suit remote learning. EFL teachers also faced time management, and content development challenges. On the other hand, learners faced several complications in online learning; for instance, the new learning climate that was caused by the sudden shift, learners' engagement and gadget-related issues. In this chapter, the researchers aim to review literature about the previously discussed challenges that teachers faced in e-learning and attempt to recommend practical solutions for these challenges.

2.1 Language Teaching Strategies and Learning Styles in E-Learning

Learning styles have been proven to have a significant impact on the learning process. Each individual has a unique learning style that influences how he or she interacts with his or her learning environment (Moussa, 2014). In the same context, Shirani et al. (2016) state that the Higher Education System has faced a wide range of issues due to the modern world's rapid developments. As a result, more educators must be trained in interdisciplinary subjects.

2.1.1 Language Learning Styles in E-Learning

EFL Students learn the English language in various ways, and some prefer to learn by watching and listening, while others prefer to learn by doing and moving or in a hands-on environment. As a result, when creating a distance-learning course, it is important to understand students' learning styles in order to ensure the efficiency course and fulfil students' needs. According to Zapalska and Brozik (2006) it is crucial that students' learning preferences are taken into account in online education. Teachers need to know more about learning differences and how to handle the range of learning styles present in their students in order to teach more effectively in online courses.

In e-learning, it is important for teachers to identify their students learning styles in order to meet their needs when designing the e-learning language course. Language learning styles are significant factors which serve teachers to determine how and to what extent students learn a foreign language. Oxford (2003) argues that the more teachers understand their students' learning styles, the better they can customize their L2 instruction, as well as strategy teaching that can be woven into language instruction, to those preferences. Some students may require more visual instruction, while others may prefer auditory, kinesthetic, or tactile instruction. Teachers cannot systematically provide the needed instructional variety

without adequate knowledge of their individual students' style preferences. However, in e-learning, this task is extremely challenging for L2 teachers.

2.1.2 Learning Styles: Traditional Learning Vs. E-Learning

Zapalska and Brozik (2006) compared between learning styles in both traditional learning and online learning as how teachers can identify students' learning styles in both settings in order to build or design their content accordingly. There are methods that a teacher can use in a traditional classroom environment to recognize a student's unique learning style. The first step is to carry out a preliminary study by conducting brief personal interviews with students as well as formal observations of their individual classroom behaviors. An in-depth personal interview with the student is another step in determining a student's learning style. The last step in identifying students' learning styles is using checklists.

In e-learning, observations and in-depth personal interviews are difficult to perform in online classes which can be considered as a challenge for teachers that will not allow them to identify students' learning styles without direct interaction. The authors continue to emphasize that even if a student learns best in one specific style, he or she should be exposed to a range of learning experiences in order to become a more flexible learner. It is possible to identify an adequate learning background after students' learning styles are defined.

Due to the gap between teachers and students in e-learning, educators are unable to recognize students' needs as effectively as they do in traditional classes. Foreign language teachers must have a broad understanding of their students' needs and proficiency levels in the target language in order to develop a course that meets those needs. Even if teachers conducted individual online interviews with students, they could not be certain that what was conveyed in the interview reflects the students' true level because teachers have little knowledge of what is going on behind the student's computer screen.

2.1.3 Overcoming the Challenge of Learning Styles in E-Learning

In 1995, Lincoln University in Canterbury, New Zealand, Neil D. Fleming designed the VARK questionnaire. It focuses on learners' and teachers' modal preferences. According to Neil D. Fleming, the VARK questionnaire's author, using this tool allows teachers to recognize more students because the teaching and learning styles can be better matched (Canfield, 1988, as cited in Zapalska & Brozik, 2006).

The most popular mode of information exchange, according to the author, is speech that reaches the learner's ear, which is coded as aural (A) in the questionnaire. Some students express a preference for reading written words to get details. Since reading and writing are their preferred modes of receiving knowledge, this group of students is labeled read/writers (R). A third group of students is labeled visual (V), since they prefer to receive information in the form of graphs, mind maps, and flow diagrams. They tend to remember details by visualizing or enhancing it with colors and layout. The final group of students prefers to learn by all of their senses, such as touch, hearing, taste, smell, and sight. This category of students is labeled kinesthetic (K). This community of students prefers realistic, multisensory learning experiences. It is highly recommended that they learn by doing, and abstract content must be introduced to them using appropriate analogies, real-life examples, or metaphors.

There is no restriction on which the four modes a student or instructor may use: V, A, R, or K. Both students and teachers usually have a clear preference for one mode while still having relative weaknesses or strengths in other modes (Zapalska & Brozik, 2006).

2.1.4 Language Teaching Strategies in E-Learning

The majority of online courses are text-based. Some students may prefer this, but it is important to keep in mind that students have different learning styles. These differences can occur in areas such as general abilities, competence, information processing, and application

of information to new situations among students in a learning context. To discuss learners' individual differences in learning styles, Zapalska and Brozik (2006) propose the following three teaching strategies for use in an online course:

➤ **Provide content in multiple formats**

This can be achieved by using a variety of communication methods. Audio-streamed lectures can be coordinated with the appropriate PowerPoint presentation. These lectures can be transcribed and made available on the university library's website. Webchat room discussion groups may also be used to present “content”, with students being required to exchange and discuss information with one another. Google Meet, Zoom, and Skype are just a few examples of the platforms that enable students and teachers to meet remotely. Teachers may also provide students with links to external websites that provide supplementary content on the current subject for additional information and knowledge.

When the instructor presents “content” in a variety of ways, students will be able to meet their needs according to their learning styles. Furthermore, instead of being stuck in the same learning routine, students will no longer suffer from academic boredom as they embark on new learning adventures. Besides that, learners' language skills will improve as a result of exposure to a variety of learning experiences. Students will improve their listening skills if they listen to pre-recorded lectures. Students will be able to engage in direct communication through Google Meet, Zoom, and Skype, which will help them improve their speaking skills. Finally, transcribed lectures can help students improve their reading and writing abilities. As they rewrite sentences in their notebooks, students can learn new vocabulary and how to form new sentences.

➤ **Allow for individual locus of control**

All of the courses offer a variety of navigation options. Links or a graphic organizer may be used to access “content”. Students should have several options for accessing course

content. While the course can be designed and presented in a hierarchical order, students should be able to move through the topics in any order they choose.

➤ **Encourage active and collaborative interaction**

Individual as well as group-based tasks should be included in each course. Students collaborate in virtual teams to solve problems, analyze cases, and create community deliverables. Individual perspectives, viewpoints, and experiences can be heard and considered in these assignments. These interactions teach the concept of deciding to disagree.

Putting EFL students in groups encourages them to speak up and practice the language they are learning. Speaking is an important skill, and for students at any stage of their learning journey, producing out loud language can be intimidating and challenging. They can reduce the intimidation factor by incorporating group work into their classes from the beginning, using the previously mentioned online platforms. When students begin speaking in their first EFL classes, it becomes a natural part of who they are and how they learn, and delaying until later in their studies is no longer an intimidating task.

2.2 Time Management in E-Learning

It is stated by Adams and Blair (2019) that effective time management is linked to improved academic performance and reduced anxiety in students; nevertheless, several students struggle to strike a balance between their education and their daily lives.

2.2.1 The Concept of Time Management in Distance Education

Time is one of the most valuable resources we have, regardless of our age, gender, working status, or other factors. Anything we hope to do or achieve in our lives would require

some amount of time. This is particularly important for those who want to study online. Since they are in control of their own learning and pace, they must be able to effectively manage their time in order to fit in their online classes and other responsibilities. It is stated by Todorov (2017) that it is far too easy to dismiss online learning. Standard classroom instruction requires learners to be in a particular location at a specific time. However, studying online necessitates that we set aside some time to prepare and go over the lessons on our own. This necessitates self-discipline and an understanding of how to effectively use our time during the day.

Online students have the freedom to study whenever and wherever they choose. Nevertheless, it is easy not to study and place important tasks on the backburner without the structure of attending an actual classroom or the direct physical contact with the professor and other students. Creating an efficient time management strategy is crucial to academic performance while juggling work, education, and family responsibilities.

2.2.2 Negative Effects of Poor Time Management on Students in E-Learning.

Many students find the learning environment intimidating, especially when they first enroll in a higher education institution. They are constantly in reactive mode and unable to complete assignments on time. In student academic life, time management is extremely critical. Additionally, understanding the effects of poor time management skills in distance learning for both students and teachers can be challenging at times and it can affect the learning process negatively. Yilmaz (2017) pointed out that poor time management leads to procrastination. Students who lack time management skills end up putting off assignments at the last minute, causing them a great deal of frustration as they struggle to keep up. If they procrastinate on several projects, they risk missing deadlines altogether. Procrastination does not necessarily have drastic implications, but it nearly always does in online learning. Self-

regulation is the most important element in completing an online course successfully. This is the ability to self-organize and accomplish activities without the help of others.

Yilmaz (2017) compared the performance of distance learning and face-to-face students on assignments and exams. Academic procrastination and exam scores were only correlated in the face-to-face group; whereas, there was no correlation between total assignment and exam score in the distance learning group. The author explained that procrastinating students benefit from distance learning because all exam study materials are readily available. The study's findings conducted by Yilmaz suggested that distance learning environments are disadvantageous to procrastinators.

2.2.3 Time Management Strategies for Online Learners

Time management is a major concern for online learners, especially those in higher education who must balance study or continuing education with work. Burns (2015) offers several effective strategies to help online students manage their time in order to complete an online course successfully.

➤ **Make a course a priority.**

Make the course your professional focus for the duration of the course, and you are required to complete all readings, assignments, discussions, and school-based activities. If you are unable to do so, consider taking the course at a later date when you will be able to devote more time to the effort. Otherwise, find a classmate who will agree to be your study partner and will encourage you to study.

Commitment and self-discipline are crucial qualities of online learners. The most significant distinction between online and classroom learning is that online learning is student-centered rather than teacher-centered. This implies that students are in control of their own education and progress. They will be effective if they are highly motivated, log on and

participate in each course, and produce high-quality work. They will not, however, if they log on infrequently, participate infrequently, or send low-quality work. Independent learners are the target audience for online higher education. As a result, students must prioritize their studies.

➤ **Take the course with a friend or colleague.**

"A lonely experience," as one student puts it, is what online learning is like. By enlisting the help of a friend or a classmate, you will make the course less lonely and improve your chances of completing it and managing your time effectively. This could be for credit or not, and his or her position could be more casual than formal. When online students have real-life peers, they are more likely to finish a course. It also does not hurt to have someone to assist you in time management.

➤ **Set aside one hour a day to work on the course.**

Consider an hour a day as class time. If you do not have an hour to spare, set aside 15 minutes four times a day. When you first turn on your screen in the morning, make the course/readings/discussion the first thing you do.

➤ **Make a study plan.**

Schedule time to work on the course throughout the week. Decide when you and your study partner or team will meet to go over the course readings and engage in the online discussions.

➤ **Always ask for help if needed.**

If you are having trouble, or you did not grasp a concept, or are completely lost, always seek assistance—from your studying partner, your classmates, and your online teacher. Online classes are time-sensitive, so you should not waste a lot of time struggling alone.

2.2.4 Negative Effects of Poor Time Management on Teachers in E-Learning

Likewise, Teachers find time management challenging in remote learning. Shi, Bonk, and Magjuka (2006) claim that teachers' workloads increase as a result of the significant time investment in course preparation, and they are forced to become "24-hour professors" in order to respond to student inquiries while teaching.

Traditional classes have direct, synchronous, verbal, and usually one-to-many interactions in terms of class interaction. Students can ask questions and receive immediate responses, and teachers can assess or simply sense their students' comprehension levels in real time. In discussions, the instructor manages the student turn-taking. However, in online classes, the teacher and students barely see each other. In both asynchronous and synchronous conversations, the interaction is many to many, making it difficult to follow. There is a delay in receiving input from learners or the teacher in asynchronous discussions. When fingers do the talking in synchronous conversations, there is always a typing delay. Imposing structure on the turn-taking in online discussions can be difficult. Online discussions, on the other hand, can be archived and accessed several times, as mentioned previously (Shi et al., 2006).

2.2.5 Time Management Strategies for Online Teachers

Since an online course differs from a traditional classroom in the ways mentioned above, a new online teacher must learn several specific strategies in order to effectively manage the class. Six-time management strategies for teaching an online course are suggested below by (Shi et al., 2006).

➤ Write Concisely and Clearly

The value of clear and concise writing of course materials cannot be overstated because writing is a major, and often the only, channel of communication in an online class. If a student considers a sentence to be ambiguous, the teacher may have to spend precious time clarifying it. Spending an extra five or ten minutes polishing a message or task directions before distributing or publishing them could save you hours of clarification later.

Writing for digital media is not the same as writing for print. Because of the lower resolution and the fact that there can only be one page on screen at a time, text on screen is typically more difficult to read than text on paper.

➤ Organize information in an easy-to-follow order.

Course materials should be introduced clearly in a way that all students may understand while generally fulfilling the instructor's purpose to eliminate student frustration and the feeling of being lost. This can be accomplished in a variety of ways, as detailed below.

- Divide the materials into weekly courses and assign start and end dates to each. Even if the course materials require larger units, it is always necessary to number and date them.

- For each course, create a "Read Me First" document. The teacher should provide instructions on how to use the other materials in the course in this text. Each course often contains several files or documents. A document named "Read Me First" is easy to overlook and can help online students and class visitors avoid misunderstanding.
- Optional readings should be labeled. By presenting so much information online, instructors risk overloading students. Making non-essential material optional allows students to concentrate on the more important information, avoiding overwhelm for some students and allowing others to explore beyond the course requirements.

➤ **Be explicit and emphatic about the time requirement in the syllabus**

The rules for assignment due dates and attendance are normally spelled out in the syllabus of each course. Since the teacher cannot read the syllabus to the class in an online course, directing students' attention to course instructions and policies is much more critical.

Make the task due dates and times crystal clear. Since students can be in various time zones, the teacher must specify which time zone each deadline falls under. Furthermore, since distance students may be working part-time, setting the deadline at midnight Sunday or Monday allows students to work on their assignments over the weekend. A valid example is the following sample:

Unless otherwise stated, all deliverables are due by midnight on Sunday (your time zone). That is, homework for Week 2 is due on the Sunday before Week 3 starts, and so on.

➤ **Manage asynchronous discussions.**

In Web-based courses, asynchronous discussions are very common because they can improve the interactivity of the online learning experience when used properly. Live classroom discussions and asynchronous discussions, on the other hand, have dramatically different time distributions. Here are several pointers on how to handle asynchronous conversations effectively (Shi et al., 2006)

Make the rules of participation clear. Students should be aware of the frequency at which they are supposed to engage in online discussions. It is also normal for some students to be the first to post their responses to discussion questions, which can be unfair to other students. The teacher will appoint a rotating list of students to lead a discussion in this situation.

Answers to commonly asked questions should be posted in a public area. When you are teaching online, you could get asked the same question over and over again. Instructors may use the announcement area to post answers to specific student questions, benefiting the entire class and saving time for themselves.

Make a guideline for yourself when it comes to participation. At the start of the discussion activity, the teacher should make it clear to the class whether he or she would actively engage in the discussion. If there will be teacher involvement, it should be made clear to students what type of participation, how frequently it will occur, and when it will occur. This way, the teacher will not have to search and post repeatedly, which is a hassle for both the instructor and the students.

➤ **Take advantage of the technical tools available**

In certain cases, resources are available in learning platforms to assist teachers in increasing their job performance. For example, Zoom's platform developers have created a set of features to meet the needs of various instructors such as hand-raising and group-works features.

➤ **Utilize other resources**

Collaborate with colleagues in the department on course concepts and materials. Instructors teaching online courses may find that the time they spend exchanging ideas in faculty is well-spent in the long run, despite the fact that it takes more time and effort to meet physically. Instructors can save time by using resources instead of designing identical materials themselves.

2.3 Content Development in E-Learning

Higher education has become increasingly reliant on multimedia for teaching and learning, particularly digital video. This is due in part to the rise of blended learning and the number of students who learn entirely or partially online (Dinmore, 2019).

2.3.1 Digital Language Content Development

In digital language content development, there is an oft-quoted statement that goes like the following, "Get a technical specialist to produce a language digital content, and it will be appealing but not pedagogically effective; get a teacher to create it, and it will be educational but unattractive, slow, and awkward to use". However, in the last decade, a new breed of instructor has emerged, one who can effectively question the above-mentioned opinion, thanks to the increasing technical expertise of many teaching practitioners and the

intuitive design and wizard- and/or tutorial-based approach to many digital design products (Tomlinson, B, 2003).

According to Tomlinson (2003), one of the major challenges faced by teachers in distance learning is content creation. Instructors are often given no support in developing digital language materials that are both appealing and educational to students. Tomlinson also mentioned that teachers have been more mindful of technology advances in order to develop a digital course in the last decade. However, this cannot be applied universally to all teachers. However, we do not believe that Tomlinson is attempting to generalize too far. As a result, this problem is already used as a roadblock in distance learning.

Another important point mentioned by Tomlinson is that the shift from websites with content designed and created by software engineers to websites that promote or are built on content designed and produced by users is one of the underlying developments in the much-hyped arena of Web 2.0. This has opened up thousands of different opportunities for student-created digital resources to be used in language learning and teaching, some of which are specifically designed for the purpose, and others which are designed for much higher and far lower purposes but can be adopted and adapted for language materials.

2.3.2 Enhancing Language Skills in E-learning

According to Cai (2012) When e-learning is used to teach English, the pedagogical methods are radically changed. In the last 30 years, teacher-centered methods have dominated English teaching around the world, with an emphasis on teaching grammar and memorizing vocabulary. As a result, students received either a grade or a certificate. The majority of them were unable to communicate effectively in English.

E-learning can help students master English as quickly as possible by focusing pedagogical approaches on cultivating linguistic awareness and enhancing listening comprehension and ability to express themselves.

Cai (2012) claims that the development of language skills in E-learning differs significantly from conventional learning environments. (Cai, 2012, pp. 843-844) provided explanation of the relationship between language skills and e-learning and how they can be improved:

2.3.2.1 Listening

Language learning should begin with the auditory sense. So, what kinds of materials do learners pay attention to? All in the classroom is decided by the teacher. However, e-learning allows students to choose their own learning materials. According to psychological studies, each individual is more concerned with their own decisions. These materials are normally chosen by students who are interested in them. The term "direct interest" refers to a person's interest in the content itself. Direct interest leads to improved learning.

2.3.2.2 Reading

E-learning helps students to read materials that they are interested in. When the book "Battle Hymn of the Tiger Mother" was released, for example, it drew immediate attention from the media. There were over 4,000 views on "The Wall Street Journal" website. Around 100,000 comments were also posted on the "Facebook" website. Thousands of letters were also sent to the author. Some readers praised the author, while others said she was on the verge of "abusing" her two daughters. These materials will help students learn the most up-to-date English.

2.3.2.3 Translating

Students occasionally struggle to comprehend the materials they come across. As a result, some or all of the pieces must be translated. They should ask their instructor if they do not understand anything. Students can better understand the materials and expand their vocabulary by translating. They can also learn about grammar and Western cultures.

2.3.2.4 Speaking

The instructor will ask students to expand on a case, including who, where, when, what, and why, based on the learning materials that they have listened to, read, and translated, so that students can improve their oral skills. Later on, A web-based conference for students in higher education can also be organized. For instance, we continue to choose the topic "Tiger Mother." Is it possible that the question is: Do you agree with what Tiger Mother did? Why are those in the United States opposed to her?

2.3.2.5 Writing

Students are expected to write down a short report after attending the webinar, as well as their own thoughts, comments, and so on, after listening to, reading, interpreting, and speaking the material. Make a description for each piece of information. Students may improve their ability to communicate in English in this way through writing.

2.4 Learners' Problems in E-Learning

The Algerian Ministry of Higher Education introduced e-learning as an alternative to traditional face-to-face learning during the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020. However, several students encountered significant obstacles/problems that prevented them from successfully completing their courses.

2.4.1 Technical Issues Faced by Students in E-learning

As stated by Kumar (2015) many students do not have the reliable Internet connection that online courses require, and as a result, they fall behind in their classes, making their learning experience difficult. Furthermore, the majority of them live off campus and find it difficult to keep up with the course's technical requirements. Some of them do not even own computers and seek technological assistance from learning resource centers. The best way to solve this problem is to know exactly what kind of technical help they will need before enrolling in a course, as well as adequately equipping themselves to complete it successfully.

We assume the Kumar (2015) solution to this problem is intended for students who choose to study online rather than those who have been shifted from traditional to online classes. When it comes to students who shifted to online learning during the COVID-19 pandemic, we recommend that they borrow computers from family or friends. When it comes to a poor Internet connection, we recommend that the university covers the costs of Internet memberships for students during their enrollment time.

2.4.2 Learners' Self-Motivation in E-Learning

Self-motivation is an important aspect of eLearning, but many online students, to their surprise, lack it. Many students fall behind after enrolling in distance learning courses and consider giving up because the challenges of navigating a technical medium seem insurmountable. Students must find the motivation to pursue current educational trends as well as better prepare themselves for future educational and career challenges. Only a positive mindset will assist them in overcoming the difficulties of eLearning; while this is difficult to practice, students must recognize that it is important in order to enjoy the benefits of eLearning in the future (Kumar, 2015).

We would like to emphasize the importance of producing appealing materials in order to keep students engaged and motivated in the class. Learning styles are another consideration that instructors should consider. In order to meet their needs, teachers should pay attention to their students' learning interests and deliver courses in different formats.

2.4.3 Learners and Computer Literacy

Highly (2014) argues that despite the fact that students are typically good at technology and thus capable of managing computers, computer literacy is a major problem among today's students. Many of them are unable to use basic programs like Microsoft Word and PowerPoint, and therefore are unable to manage their files. Furthermore, many students find it difficult to solve basic computer problems because they lack expertise in this field. Technological proficiency, on the other hand, is required for students to follow online courses because it allows them to handle their assignments and courseware without difficulty.

Conclusion

This chapter has largely focused on the major challenges that EFL teachers face in e-learning, as well as the issues that students face when studying online. Based on our review of the literature, we made recommendations for solutions to these problems. As a result, the chapter goes over some of the issues that instructors face in distance learning, such as learning styles. With the distance gap between the two participants of the learning process, teachers find it difficult to identify learners' learning styles remotely. Thus, we suggested that teachers should use the VARK Questionnaire to overcome this issue. Moreover, we discussed the importance of time management for both teachers and students, as well as the negative consequences of poor time management on the learning process. We also talked about the difficulties of creating digital language materials and how language skills can be improved through e-learning. Finally, we discussed some of the challenges that distance learners face, including technical issues, self-motivation, and computer literacy. The next chapter will specifically focus on analyzing teachers' interviews and students' questionnaires.

Chapter Three: Field Work

Introduction

The third chapter focuses on the practical aspects of the current study. It mainly highlights data collection and analysis. It is a case study of an educational situation in which we attempted to analyze the challenges that Algerian teachers and students have when participating in distant learning. It is made up of two data collection tools: a student questionnaire and an interview with teachers. The purpose of the students' questionnaire is to gain a better understanding of their perspective or experience with distant learning, as well as the difficulties they encounter in e-learning. Furthermore, the second tool is an interview with EFL teachers at Mohamed Khider University, which aims to learn about the teachers' perspectives on distance learning in Algeria and the challenges they face as EFL teachers. As a result, after describing the research instruments and data analysis methods, the chapter focuses on the main findings.

3.1 Research Methodology

According to Singh (2006), C.C. Crawford states that research is essentially a methodical and disciplined way of thinking that uses specialized tools, methods, and procedures to arrive at a better answer to a problem than would otherwise be attainable. It begins with a problem, gathers data or facts, critically analyzes them, and makes judgments based on the evidence. In other words, research aims to find solutions to issues that have remained unanswered so far, and the answers are dependent on human efforts. In common parlance, it entails to a quest for knowledge (Kothari, 1990).

Similarly, Waltz and Bansell (1981), define research methodology as a method for finding answers to issues or discovering and interpreting new facts and relationships that is methodical, formal, rigorous, and precise. The systematic, theoretical analysis of the

procedures used in a field of research is known as methodology. It entails the theoretical examination of the body's methods and principles in relation to a field of study.

3.1.1 Research Approaches

Research approaches are research plans and procedures that cover the study steps from general assumptions to precise data collection, analysis, and interpretation methodologies. Depending on the nature of the research problem, a research study may involve one or more approaches. Quantitative, qualitative, and mixed methodologies are the three main approaches (Creswell, 2013).

According to Dörnyei (2019), quantitative research entails data gathering approaches that primarily provide numerical data, which is subsequently analyzed using statistical methods. A typical example is a questionnaire that is then analyzed using statistical software such as SPSS. On the contrary, data collection approaches in qualitative research produce mostly open-ended, non-numerical data, which is then analyzed predominantly using non-statistical approaches. Interview research, including transcribed recordings analyzed using qualitative content analysis is an example.

The mixed-methods approach includes both quantitative and qualitative data collection. When these two methodologies are combined, they offer a more comprehensive grasp of a study problem than each strategy independently. The mixed methods approach to research is an addition to, not a substitute for, the quantitative and qualitative research methodologies, as the latter two will continue to be relevant and essential (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004).

Since the goal of this present study is to investigate and identify the major challenges that EFL teachers and students encounter in distance learning, as well as their impact on learners' academic performance, the researchers decided that a mixed-methods approach (quantitative and qualitative approaches) would be more suitable because it serves the nature of the study. More significantly, the chosen method allows the researchers to learn about the attitudes of Algerian teachers and learners about e-learning in the Algerian educational system.

3.1.2 Research Variables

In research projects, the term "variable" is frequently used. When planning quantitative or qualitative research projects, it is critical to define and identify the variables. In any investigation, variables are more exciting than constants. As a result, it is essential for researchers to understand this phrase and the principles it refers to. There are various types of variables, each of which has a distinctive impact on a study. The independent and dependent variables are the most common (Kaur, 2013).

As for the variables of this study, the researchers identify its variables as the follows:

- **The Independent Variable:** Challenges and problems facing Algerian EFL teachers and learners in e-learning
- **The Dependent Variable:** Learners' academic performance.

3.1.3 Research Design

Leedy (1997, p. 195) describes research design as a study plan that lays out the overarching structure for data collection. It is defined by McMillan and Schumacher (2001, p. 166) as a strategy for choosing subjects, study settings, and data collecting processes in order to answer the research question (s). They go on to say that the purpose of a good study design is to provide results that can be trusted. According to Durrheim (2004), research design is a strategic framework for action that acts as a link between research questions and research strategy execution.

There is some overlap between the concepts of research designs and research approaches. The research design is a model or a framework that the entire study is based on; it controls the study's style and gives the study's road map in terms of sample size, data collecting instruments, and analysis procedures. Research approaches, on the other hand, are paradigms and analytic frameworks that might be quantitative, qualitative, or mixed-methods. One or more approaches may be used in a given study design. In a cross-sectional questionnaire, for example, one can choose between a quantitative and a mixed-methods.

As for the research design for this study, the researchers chose a descriptive research design for our study because it best reflects the nature of our research. In essence, the purpose of descriptive research is to characterize a phenomenon or an issue, as well as the influence or impact it has. This research design is more interested in what happened than how or why it happened. As a result, data is frequently gathered through observations, interviews, and questionnaires. In such (a) research, data may be gathered qualitatively, but it is frequently analyzed quantitatively, with frequencies, percentages, averages, and other statistical analyses used to determine relationships (Nassaji, 2015).

3.2. Sampling and Population

Since it is rarely feasible, effective, or ethical to examine entire populations, choosing a study sample is a critical stage in any research undertaking. The goal of research sampling is to take a representative sample of the population and then generalize the findings back to the entire population. The best method to use is determined by the study's objectives (Marshall, 1996).

3.2.1. Population

The population, in research terms, can be defined as a large group of people, institutions, items, and so on who have similar qualities that the researcher is interested in. A population can therefore be defined as an aggregate observation of individuals grouped together by a common attribute. It also refers to the total pool from which a statistical sample is drawn. To put it another way, Polit and Hungler (1999, p. 37) define the population as the sum of all objects, subjects, or members that meet a set of criteria.

3.2.2. Sample

For the purpose of data collecting, it is impractical for a researcher to approach all of the individuals involved in a population; instead, they approach a representative group, which is referred to as a sample. A sample, in research terms, is a group of individuals, objects, or items selected for measurement from a wider population. To ensure that the findings from the chosen sample can be generalized to the entire population, the sample must be representative of the population. A sample is a subset of a population that has been chosen to engage in a study; it is a proportion of the total population that has been chosen to participate in the study (Polit & Hungler, 1999)

As the population and sample for this study, the English Language Branch at Mohamed Kheider University of Biskra serves as our target population as our research goal is to investigate the challenges that EFL teachers and learners face in distance learning. We selected five (5) volunteer teachers at random from a population of thirty (30). These instructors come from various teaching backgrounds and teach a variety of courses using various methods. We dealt with all English Branch students (i.e., learners from L1 to M2). Fifty (50) EFL students completed the Students' Questionnaire.

3.3 Data Collection Methods

According to (Dörnyei, 2007; Kumar, 2011), quantitative, qualitative, and mixed-methods data gathering methods are the most commonly used in research. Structured observation, structured questionnaires, and structured focus group discussions are all instances of quantitative data collection methods; yet, unstructured interviews and unstructured focus group discussions are examples of qualitative data collecting methods. Mixed-methods data collection methods, on the other hand, integrate the use of quantitative and qualitative data collection methods. The latter include semi-structured interviews, semi-structured questionnaires and so on.

The data collecting methods employed in this study are mixed-methods data collection. We conducted a semi-structured interview with EFL teachers as well as a semi-structured questionnaire with students.

3.3.1 The teachers' Interview

Interviews are a type of qualitative research that include conducting in-depth individual dialogues with a small group of people to learn about their viewpoints on a specific topic, strategy, or issue (Boyce & Neale, 2006). An interview is a one-on-one dialogue between a researcher and a participant in which information is transferred to the

interviewer (Creswell, 2012). During interviews, open-ended questions are typically asked in the aim of eliciting unbiased responses, but closed-ended questions may force participants to respond in a certain way (Creswell, 2012; McNamara, 1999).

3.3.1.1 Structure and Content

The present interview is a concise and precise interview that consists of seven (07) questions in total (open-ended and closed-ended questions) in order to limit teachers to the study's theme while also giving them the opportunity to provide as much detail and information as possible; for the purpose of enriching the study. Each question is intended to collect precise information regarding a certain aspect of our research.

The interview was conducted with teachers in person (face-to-face) after they signed the interviewee consent declaration (Appendix 3) and the interviews were recorded. In addition, the interviewing process took two weeks in May 2021; the average time per interview was between 10 to 20 minutes each. Due to the packed schedule of teachers, two (02) instructors answered our interview questions and sent their responses via email.

3.3.1.2 Aim

The purpose of the questions was to learn more about Algerian instructors' perspectives on distance learning in Algeria, particularly when it came to foreign language teaching. Other questions focused on the challenges that EFL teachers faced in e-learning as a result of the unexpected transition from traditional face-to-face teaching to distance learning, as well as how they dealt with these issues. So, in essence, the interview questions are designed to provide direct answers to the research questions for this study.

3.3.1.3 Analysis and Interpretation of the Teachers' Interview

The researchers gained a significant number of insights from this interview with teachers. However, the researchers believe that it is more effective to analyze the responses in a form of quantitative data for the sake of data accuracy. Nevertheless, the researchers consider the findings, and they will emphasize a few of them in the data analysis' overall conclusion.

The responses to our open-ended and closed-ended questions will be analyzed and themes or categories will be created. We will be able to categorize the responses and determine the challenges that EFL teachers encounter

Q1. How did you manage the unpredictable shift from traditional, face-to-face learning to distance learning during the COVID-19 pandemic?

Based on the teachers' answers of this question, we categorized the responses into the following categories:

- **Prepared for the shift: 20%**
- **Unprepared for the shift: 30%**
- **Uncertain: 10%**
- **Overwhelmed: 20%**
- **Unfamiliar: 20%**

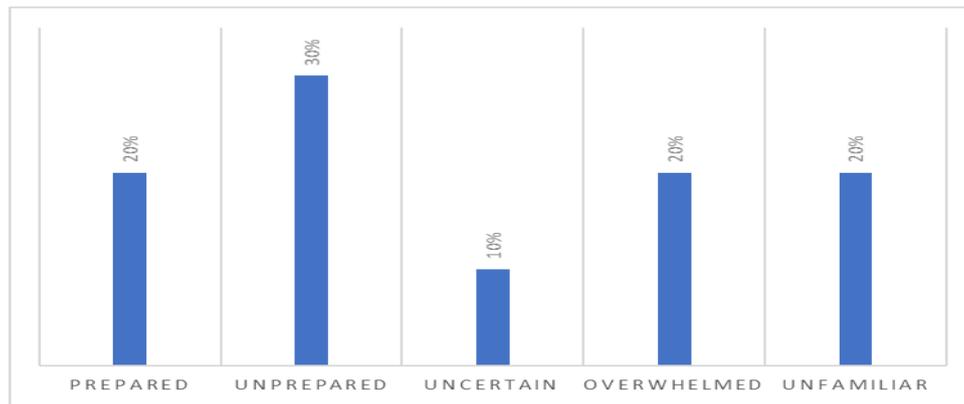


Figure 3.1: EFL Teachers' Experience with the Shift from Traditional to e-Learning Method.

This question elicits responses from teachers about their overall experiences with the abrupt or unpredictable transition from traditional face-to-face learning to distance learning. This question was designed by researchers to determine whether or not teachers were prepared for this shift. Based on the teachers' answers to this question, researchers found that 30% of teachers were unprepared for the shift to distance learning. **T2** points out that *“When we were asked to shift online, I personally found it a bit complicated and difficult. It was complicated in the sense that I am a not very familiar with these applications. First, I have to learn more about the Google meet the Zoom, and all the similar applications. When we were asked to shift online, we were actually unprepared. there was a lack of preparation, lack of familiarity, and some other technical problems”*. Similarly, **T3** stated that *“Actually not good. I still prefer face to face. I'm not a big fan of online learning”*. In addition to **T2** and **T3**, **T5** asserted that *“I honestly never expected that I would shift to distance learning, I was unprepared and overwhelmed by the new experience as I didn't know what to expect”*.

Regardless of the above negative experiences, **T1** maintained that *“I began my YouTube channel even before the pandemic, with regard to the requirements of the new methods in teaching and learning, which really require updating one's tools and strategies in the process of teaching and delivery of information, which should be a bit faster, easier, and*

also less time consuming in terms of delivery of lessons. Besides, traditional ways don't interest too much nowadays this new generation. This new generation have no time to read blogs or paragraphs or attend for long sessions with teachers. So, videos or these individual lessons would be very helpful to suit that need. Okay, during the pandemic, these courses proved to be very, very essential, and effective, and efficient too, especially with the social distancing". Likewise, T4 was also prepared for this shift and stated "It was expected".

Although the researchers are primarily interested to figure out whether teachers were prepared or not for the shift to distance learning during COVID-19 pandemic, we believe it is equally important to highlight from responses the fact that teachers were overwhelmed and uncertain by this experience. According to T5 *"I was unprepared and overwhelmed by the new experience as I didn't know what to expect"*. Similarly, T2 relates to the aforementioned point, and states *"There is even what we call a phobia of going online to teach. I know so many colleagues who didn't even try to take or to have an online course, even on Moodle, they have this kind of anxiety. They are afraid that it doesn't work. they don't know much about how to use the Internet"*

Q2. Did you face any challenges in distance learning?

Researchers noticed that all teachers (100%) answered "Yes" to this question, despite the fact that some of the teachers were prepared for the shift to online learning.

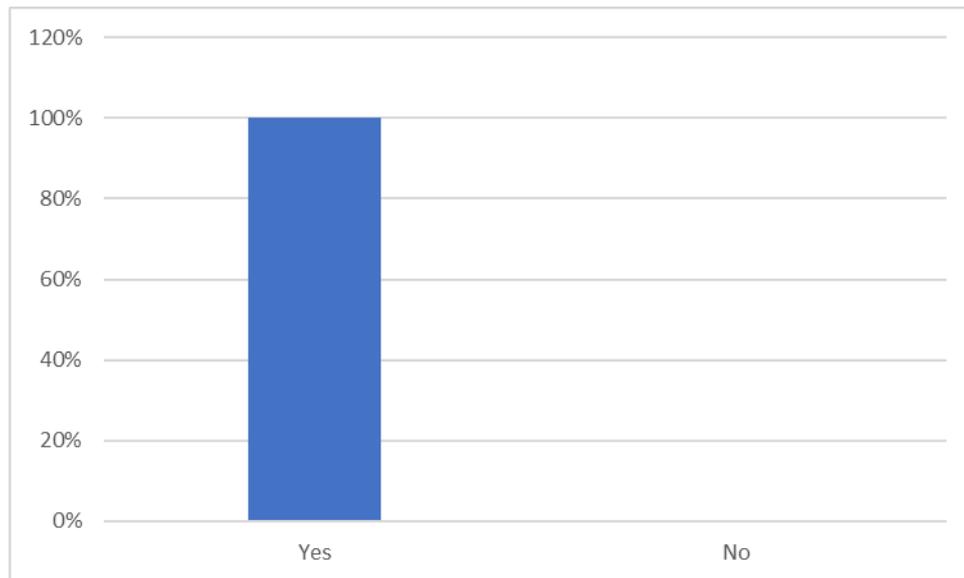


Figure 3.2: EFL Teachers and Challenges in Distance Learning.

Q3. what were the major challenges you faced in online classes?

T1: *“The challenges which really face any person who engages in such type of teaching is time. You must be totally devoted to this task of teaching online”.*

T1: *“Concerning the person who prepares these types of materials online for learners, many of them face a problem with interaction. It is a bit less than expected, especially those students who live far from the city, who have no Internet connection”*

T1: *“Another important issue to raise about these types of lessons for the sake of the brevity of the material, you know, we sacrifice discussions and activities (practice). Because this should be done in the classroom with the teacher”*

T1: *“To be frank with you, the problem nowadays is on learners, they are lazy, lenient, and careless. Normally, as a teacher I should directly post the video online and students should watch it and when they come to the classroom, we do the practice. But what happens is that I actually go to the classroom, and I reexplain everything again from scratch”.*

T1: *“Another important issue, the university’s administration does not provide teachers with what they want. I don’t have a laboratory to work in”*

T1: *“The Moodle platform is a good initiative, in spite of its complexity in the beginning. There were many problems of complexity in inserting new lessons. There are many steps to follow, I need always a video to follow and in order to insert my lessons”*

T2: *“I tried to organize some sessions online using the Zoom application. Students themselves were reluctant. I mean, the first session, only three to four students joined me. Additionally, we had also technical problems. I’m not familiar with how to mute the microphones and other related technical problems.*

T2: *“Personally, I feel that the environment at home is not appropriate to do an online lecture. For many reasons, it could be personal, or any other reasons. Sometimes, it could be very chaotic at home”.*

T3: *“How to use technology is still a big problem for me, I have never been trained to use it”.*

T3: *“It’s the students’ commitment, and the fact that I have never been trained to prepare and deliver online lessons.*

T4: *“The weak network flow, lack of knowledge in the field of distance learning on the side of many students, administration was not prepared for the new shift, the social situation in general, lack of interactivity which promotes accumulated lazy pattern of processes”.*

T5: *“I faced challenges with moderating or organizing discussions during online lessons. I remember once when I was teaching online, some random people joined and they started playing loud inappropriate music. At that moment, I did not know how should I react or what should I do”.*

Reflecting on the above responses of teachers regarding the challenges experienced in distance learning, we categorized these challenges into seven (07) main themes, and we calculated the frequency of occurrence of these challenges among teachers as follows:

- **Time Management:** 5%
- **Learners' Engagement:** 18%
- **Gadget-related Challenges:** 14%
- **Learners' Motivation:** 27%
- **Administrative Challenges:** 9%
- **Technological Literacy:** 23%
- **Setting (time & place):** 5%

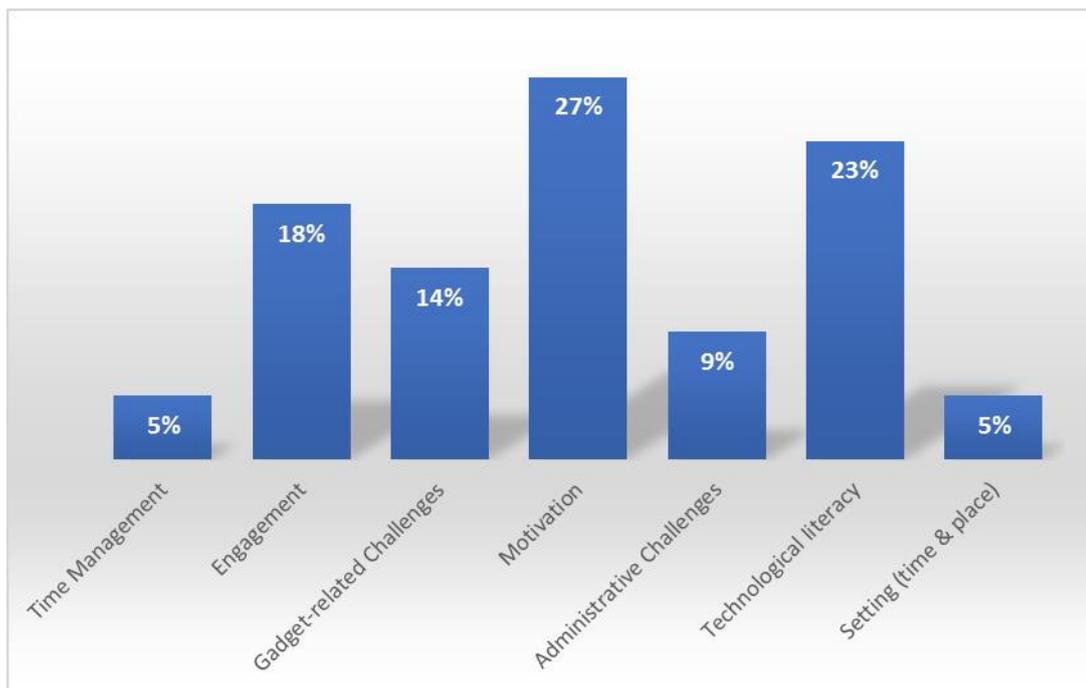


Figure 3.3: EFL Teachers' Major Challenges in Distance Learning

Q4. How did you deal with these challenges?

T1: *“It always depends on the self-reliance, and never expecting anything from anyone, always fighting to get the most of the utmost, you can get. For the problem of time consumption, I devote almost all my time to this type of teaching, and I enjoy it. For the administrative challenges, I fought to get the keys and to go to the laboratory and to make videos.*

T2: *“I tried my best to learn more about the applications on YouTube, for example, as I said, we didn't have any formal training on this. So, I learned how to manage the Moodle platform alone”*

T2: *“I overcame the challenges via trial and error. This is how I manage these challenges. So, I try, fail, and then a repeat and check. I also ask, for example, colleagues who tried how to deal with these issues. And with that, learners also helped me a lot. Some students are well versed when it comes to internet. So, they help me in solving some technical issues”*

T3: *“In a very bad way to tell you the truth”*

T5: *“I honestly get embarrassed when I find myself in a situation when I'm not in control of the session. In traditional learning/teaching, students don't dare to perform such behaviors inside the classroom; However, in distance learning, students can use fake usernames and do such things”*

We noted that teachers attempted to address some of the challenges based on their responses to this question. To begin with, teachers stated that they devote practically all of their time to online learning which takes longer than traditional learning as stated by **T1**. Furthermore, when it came to the issue of learners' engagement, teachers have not mentioned how they dealt with this issue. Additionally, teachers claimed that they used university's

laboratories due to the lack of gadget, yet they had a difficult time getting access to these labs. Last but not least, teachers were assisted by their students and/or colleagues to overcome technical problems and get familiar with how to use online platforms.

Q5. How did these challenges affect your learners' academic performance?

T1: *“According to their testimonies, by themselves, many of them come to me and they thank me, and they told me that they got better marks and understood many lessons which they couldn't understand in the classroom sessions with other teachers”*

T2: *“I can't tell because and I'm still undecided whether there is a positive or negative effect, because the period was not long enough, I cannot judge the period now because the time is insufficient to make a true evaluation. The second thing is that not all students have experienced this, because as you know, only a few students attended online sessions, only few students sat for online tests”*

T3: *“I think, according to my discussion with my students, they don't like the way it has been done, and I think they have forgotten a lot of what we have done”*

T4: *“They became lazier (80%), they missed the teacher's presential guidance, they divorced the group work that usually motivates, they became somehow procrastinators, and it affected negatively their academic spirit”.*

T5: *“Students no longer take education seriously in distance learning, some of them don't even attend and that obviously affected their academic performance”.*

T5: *“We shouldn't forget that during the pandemic, students were affected mentally or emotionally. Also, the pandemic was widely predicted to result in significantly unequal*

learning chances depending on whether learners had access to technology or not and that indeed resulted in higher heterogeneity in terms of learning and achievement”.

From the teachers’ responses to this question, we grouped the answers into three (03) categories as shown below:

- **Positive:** 10%
- **Neutral:** 20%
- **Negative:** 70%

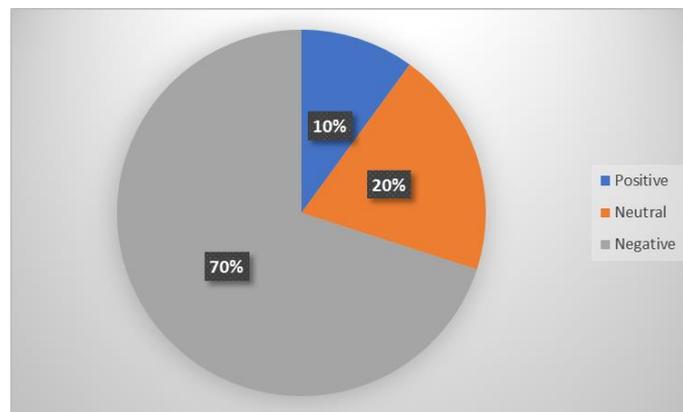


Figure 3.4: The Impact of the Challenges on Learners’ Academic Performance.

With an overall proportion of 70%, we are able to infer that a substantial majority of teachers strongly agree that the challenges they have experienced in distance learning have had an impact on learners' academic performance. 20% of instructors were undecided about whether these problems had an influence on students, mostly because they believe the time span is insufficient to provide an accurate assessment. Whereas, 10% of instructors claim that the difficulties they experience as teachers have no impact on students in remote learning.

Q6. Do you agree that online learning in Algeria is less effective than face-to-face learning, especially when it comes to language teaching? Why?

In regard to the first half of this question, we noted that all instructors (100%) agreed that online learning is less efficient in Algeria than traditional face-to-face learning, particularly in the context of language learning.

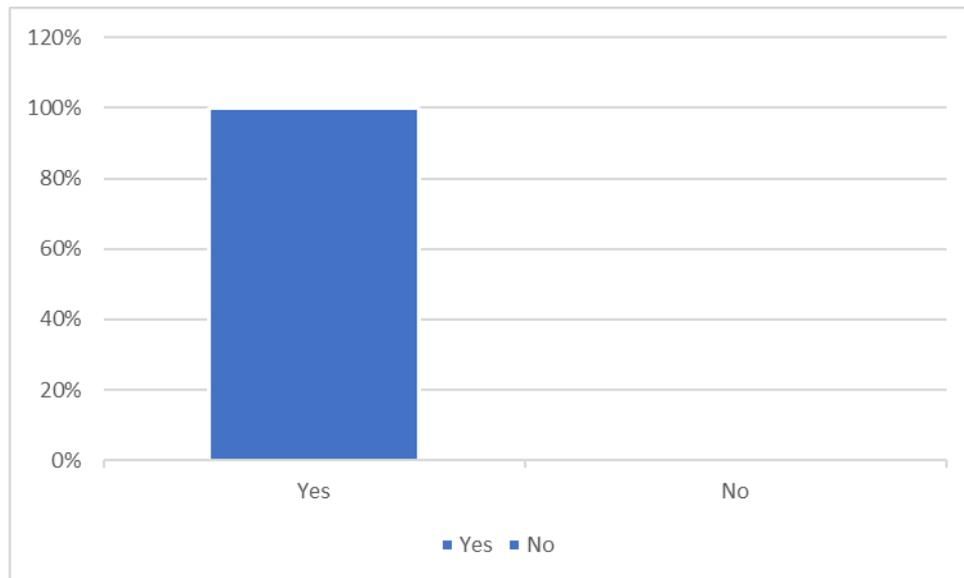


Figure 3.5: Efficacy of Distance Learning in Language Learning in Algeria.

A follow up question: Why?

T1: *“it is less effective, when you compare the rate of watching of Egyptian Channels or Moroccan channels with Nigerian channels. Yeah, they are miles away. This is shows really that I our lessons are still can say not tech-oriented learners, they still depend on the traditional means of learning”*

T2: *“There are so many problems related to the logistic, to the as I said to the equipment, the lack of equipment, this is an entire culture, okay, the entire culture that needs time to be rooted in the educational community. Once we establish that culture, here, we can talk about the process that comes. But for now, this is the first time and people are very confused”*

T2: *“There is even what we call a phobia of going online to teach. I know so many colleagues who didn't even try to take or to have an online course, even on Moodle, they have this kind of anxiety. They are afraid that it doesn't work. they don't know much about how to use the Internet”*

T2: *“the teachers’ literacy of using the internet, I’m not going to generalize, but it’s very humble”*

T2: *“the face-to-face learning till now proves to be the more effective than the online learning. I personally feel at ease with face to face because I can know the learner, I can see their reaction, I can establish this friendly atmosphere, I can ask a question and they can reply”*

T2: *“I don’t have the feeling that I’m teaching when it comes to e-learning. I feel that it’s all technical. I mean, if you fail in one aspect, the entire course will fail, you focus more and you’ll give more attention to the technical aspect, more than the pedagogical one”*

T3: *“Definitely so, according to my research, it is ineffective”*

T4: *“Mainly due to the challenges that I previously mentioned”*

T5: *“Simply because we are not yet ready for this approach due to the challenges we are facing”*

When teachers were asked about the reasons why remote learning is less effective than face-to-face learning in Algeria, particularly in language teaching, their answers were related to the challenges that they previously mentioned such as learners’ engagement, anxiety, and technological literacy. **T2** brought up an intriguing point that e-learning is a completely new culture, and it takes time to become embedded in the Algerian educational community.

Q7. Do you have any additional information or suggestions you wish to share?

This open-ended question sought to gather teachers’ additional comments and suggestions about the implementation of remote learning for teaching foreign languages in Algeria. Teachers believe that instructors should include or rely more on technology, and

they should include digital platforms such as YouTube channels or blogs into their classrooms on a regular basis. Teachers will be able to reach out to their students more effectively if they use these tools. **T1** points out *“During the covid-19 pandemic, the online teaching and learning has become really compulsively, even before the pandemic. Things have become clear that learners can no longer depend totally on the traditional ways of learning and teaching and the classroom and so on. teachers all of them should have their own also electronic or the new technological tools through which they can reach their learners, not only YouTube channels, but even blogs. Blogs are essential important”*.

Other instructors, nonetheless, were enthusiastic about the incorporation of e-learning in Algeria, but only under certain conditions. Professors claim that in order to have a successful distance learning experience, both teachers and students need be trained on how to use and benefit from e-learning. Instructors also emphasize that the transition from traditional to remote learning should be gradual, and that the administration should play a key role in this by providing teachers with the appropriate resources. **T2** highlights *“the thing that I would like to share is that if the idea of moving online is well-prepared, and teachers are trained students as well should be also trained. there should be a gradual movement to this or a gradual shift to the online teaching or online learning things will differ. I hope also that the administration should take a major part in this by providing us with for example, with the special rooms for online lectures”*. Similarly, **T3** added his voice to the above opinion where he asserted that *“we need to train our teachers and students to take up online courses, but they should not be a substitute for face-to-face learning”*.

According to **T5** *“distance learning in my opinion is less effective at teaching students than face-to-face teaching. However, because I live pretty far from university, the upside is that I can teach my students from home which is more convenient and saves me time and*

money". T5 believes that despite the difficulties that instructors encounter in remote learning, there are numerous advantages for both teachers and students.

3.3.1.4 Discussion and Interpretation of the Findings

Thanks to teachers' thorough feedback regarding their experiences with remote learning during the COVID-19 pandemic, their responses provided in-depth answers to the majority of our research questions. Based on the data gathered from the teachers' interview, the researchers understood the relationship between the challenges that teachers encountered in distance learning and students' academic performance. Therefore, conclusions can be stated as follows:

First of all, during the COVID-19 pandemic, online foreign language learning at higher education facilitated the process of adapting to the worldwide restrictions. The majority of teachers were unprepared for this unpredictable shift from traditional language learning to online language learning, which presented them with numerous challenges afterwards. Consequently, several teachers were unprepared to teach online, which necessitated a significant amount of time and effort to deal with technology, new software, new ways of presenting educational language materials, and new teaching styles, approaches, and methods. Moreover, teachers experienced a normal anticipatory anxiety as a result of the abrupt change, which led them to avoid certain activities. According to the teachers' interview responses, several EFL teachers were overwhelmed and uncertain about the new experience since they were not used to incorporating technology into foreign language instruction.

Additionally, the data gathered from the teachers' interview provided a substantial answer to our first research question regarding the major challenges that Algerian EFL teachers encountered in distance language learning. The results indicate that EFL teachers faced the following challenges: Time management, students' engagement, gadget-related

challenges, students' motivation, administrative challenges, learning settings, and technological literacy.

The researchers addressed the issue of time management in online learning in the literature review for this present study. According to the findings, Algerian EFL teachers encountered this problem since they did not incorporate technology into their language sessions prior to the pandemic. As a result, teachers have devoted a significant amount of time and effort adjusting their traditional language teaching approaches to new ones that are more suitable for distance language learning.

Furthermore, in the traditional language learning process, the interaction between students and their teacher(s) is crucial, and it is equally important for online English learners since it provides them with the needed language skills and contributes to the success of online learning course. Algerian EFL teachers, on the other hand, claimed that they missed this type of interaction with their students. During Covid-19 epidemic, teachers had technical issues during online sessions, causing a disconnect or a gap between them and their students. Thus, due to a lack of practice, some teachers stated that the lack of interaction had a negative impact on their students' English communicative skills.

Another challenge that EFL teachers experienced is the lack of pedagogical supporting facilities and technological illiteracy. Firstly, there is no doubt that learning a language depends heavily on the interaction between the teacher and students. During Covid-19 pandemic, the majority of Algerian EFL teachers used Moodle platform as a tool for language teaching. The previously mentioned platform does not allow a direct interaction between the teacher and students. When teachers used other platforms, such as Zoom or Google Meet, in order to engage with students, they faced technical issues due to poor Internet connection and their unfamiliarity of these modern platforms. Secondly, teachers

received a brief training on how to use remote learning tools, yet the latter proved to be ineffective.

Furthermore, according to the data acquired from the teacher interviews, students' motivation has reduced considerably. Students are left to encourage themselves and push through barriers and challenges alone with less guidance and support from peers and teachers in distant learning. Based on the teachers' feedback on how the encountered challenges affected students' academic performance, we believe that students are experiencing a lack of academic motivation as a result of the present pandemic. For many students, "campus life" fuels their academic enthusiasm as well as their overall well-being. The sudden change left students confused and isolated.

3.3.2 Students' Questionnaire

A questionnaire is a type of data collecting instrument that consists of a series of questions or other forms of prompts aimed at gathering information from respondents. Closed-ended, open-ended, or a combination of the two types of questions can be found in questionnaires. Questionnaires are one of the most used data gathering tools in research (Kothari, 1990, p.100).

According to Mugenda and Mugenda (2003) questionnaires are a low-cost tool of gathering data, and they are organized around the study's objectives. Questionnaires are the most commonly used data collecting tools because they are a quick and easy way to collect large amounts of data from a wide group of people. Because the researcher is not required to be present when completing questionnaires, data can be acquired fast. However, one issue with questionnaires is that the respondents may lie in order to maintain social status. Most people want to project a positive picture of themselves; thus, they may lie or distort the truth to make themselves look superior.

3.3.2.1 Structure and Content

The researchers employed the current questionnaire as the second data collection tool in our investigation. It is a ten-question, semi-structured questionnaire with open-ended and closed-ended questions. The first two questions seek information on whether or not students studied online and how they felt about the overall experience. The next two questions provide information about the gadgets that students utilize for remote learning and their utility. The fifth and sixth questions compare students' academic achievement before and after they took online classes. The other questions gather data on a variety of topics, such as students' problems, time management, and the efficacy of online language learning in Algeria.

3.3.2.2 Aim

The purpose of the questionnaire employed in this study is to gather data from Algerian EFL students about:

- Their overall experience in online language learning.
- The challenges they encountered in their learning process.
- Their academic achievements during distance learning compared to traditional language learning.
- Their insights on whether distance language learning is a viable alternative to traditional language instruction.

3.3.2.3 Analysis and Interpretation of the Students' Questionnaire

The purpose of this questionnaire is to collect data, insights, and perspectives from Algerian EFL students. The data collected will be analyzed and interpreted in order to fulfill and strengthen our research.

Q1. Have you studied online at Mohamed Khider University during COVID-19 pandemic?

Researchers designed this question in order to determine the students who did not study online during the COVID-19 pandemic. For the sake of accuracy, the responses received from this question allowed the researchers to eliminate responses from those who did not study remotely.

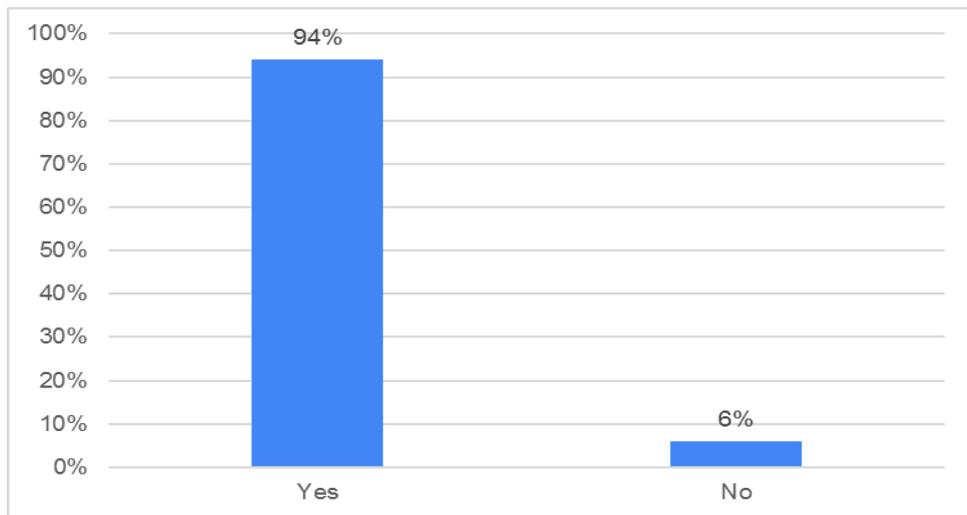


Figure 3.6: The Proportion of Students Who Studied Online During COVID-19 Pandemic.

Based on students' responses to this question, the researchers found out that forty-seven (47) students among our sample studied online during COVID-19 Pandemic, while other three (03) students answered "No" to this question.

Q2. If yes, how was your overall experience with e-learning as an EFL student?

This question attempts to elicit answers from Algerian EFL students about their overall experience with online education. Researchers can use this data to determine whether teachers should continue to teach online or switch to face-to-face classes.

Students' Overall Experience with e-learning	
Poor	13
Below Average	12
Average	14
Good	11
Excellent	0

Table 3.1: Students' Overall Experience with e-learning

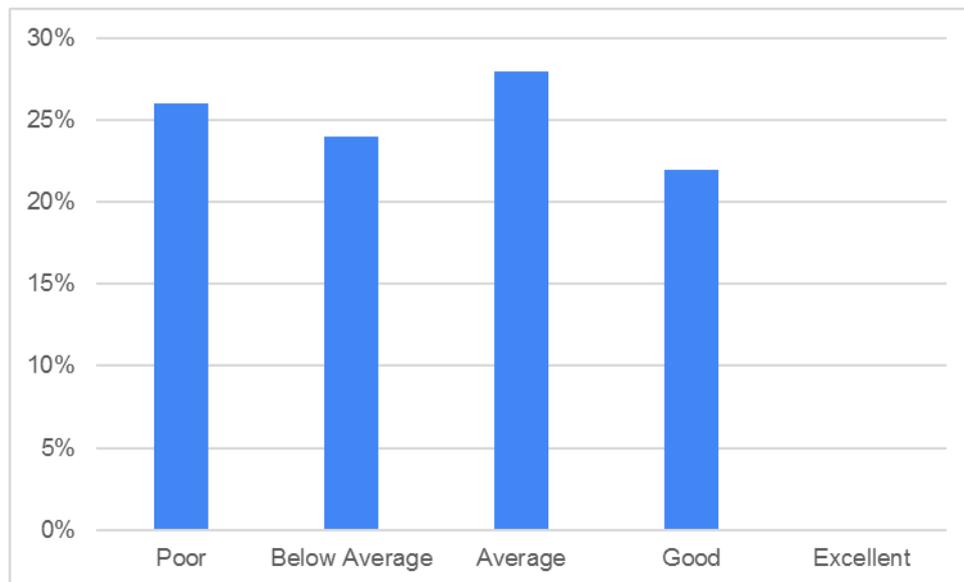


Figure 3.7: The Proportion of EFL Students' Overall Experience with e-Learning.

In this question that our sample were asked about their experience with distance learning, as represented by **Table 3.1** and **Figure 3.7**, the answers were as follows:

- Thirteen (13) students answered Poor (26%)
- Twelve (12) students answered Below Average (24%)
- Thirteen (14) students answered Average (28%)
- Eleven (11) students answered Good (22%)

- No one answered Excellent (0%)

A follow up question: Please explain why?

Based on EFL students' responses to the previous question, this open-ended question was designed by the researchers to learn more about their experience with distance learning. We understood that some students favored the new experience, yet they struggled with the Internet flow; *"the only negative thing about it was our network, it disconnected our instructor many times, but overall, it was good!"*. Other students complained about the platform used for teaching as it was not user-friendly. Students claim that *"The platform was confusing to use and I couldn't figure out the order and classification of lessons"*. Similarly, a number of students did not have access to online platform and they stated *"I could not keep track of lectures and assignments since they were shared randomly in different Facebook groups. The used platform (i.e. Moodle) was very confusing and I couldn't have access to some lectures even though am a student"*. On the other hand, several students enjoyed learning online and they mentioned that they become more productive and more independent in their learning; *"I kind of like learning online than going to school. During the pandemic our teachers keep posting lectures and I read them then I go to do a further research about the lecture so I can learn and understand more. But when the I go to university the teacher explains the lecture to us but when I return home, I don't do any research about the lecture because I feel like ok I got it no need to do extra research"*.

Q3. Do you have access to a device for learning online?

Students should have constant access to a device for online study. The researchers designed this question to figure out whether there are any issues with the device's hardware quality used by EFL students. Alternatively, if they share the gadget with others in the house and are unable to utilize it when they are required.

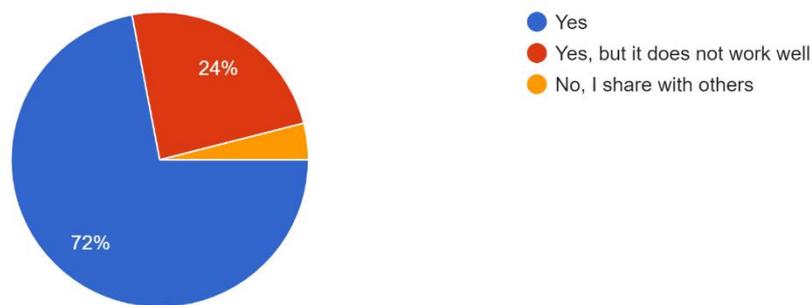


Figure 3.8: EFL Students' Access to a Device for Online Learning

According to **Figure 3.8**, the majority of students have access to a device for online learning (72%), and (24%) of the students own a device, but it does not function well. Additionally, based on the data gathered from this question, (04%) of students do not have a personal device, but they share with others.

Q4. What device do you use for distance learning?

This question was created by the researchers to determine if students use a laptop, desktop, smartphone, or tablet for distant learning. Because of the size and quality of the screen, a laptop or desktop would be the best option. This is a multiple-choice question, which allows EFL students to pick more than one gadget if they want to.

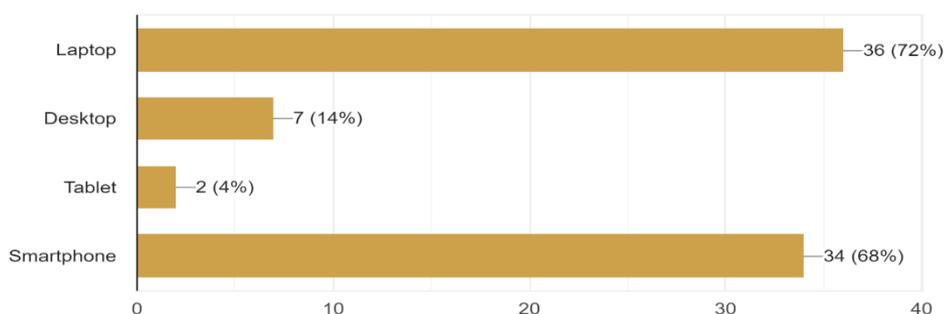


Figure 3.9: Devices Used by EFL Students in Distance Learning

Figure 3.9 shows that the majority of students used laptops and smartphones to learn online. A small percentage of EFL students use desktops or tablets to learn.

Q5. Rate your level in the following language aspects before studying online (In face-to-face classes). Note that number one (1) is Novice, and number five (5) is Advanced.

This question was created to gather numerical data about EFL students' proficiency in the following language aspects: Speaking – Grammar – Vocabulary - Writing. The data gathered illustrates students' level **Before** engaging in remote education.

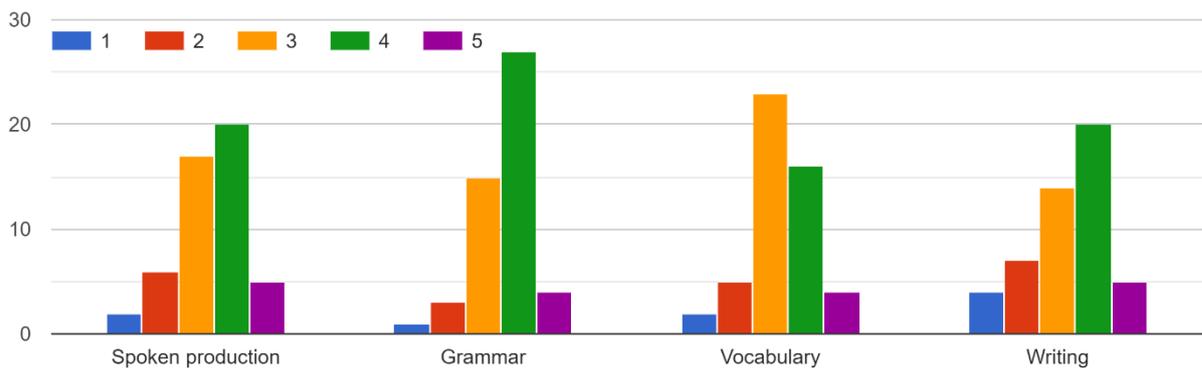


Figure 3.10: Students’ Language Proficiency Before Engaging in Distance Learning

Q6. Rate your level in the following language aspects after studying online.

Note that number one (1) is Novice, and number five (5) is Advanced.

This question was created to gather numerical data about EFL students' proficiency in the following language aspects: Speaking – Grammar – Vocabulary - Writing. The data gathered illustrates students' level **After** engaging in remote education.

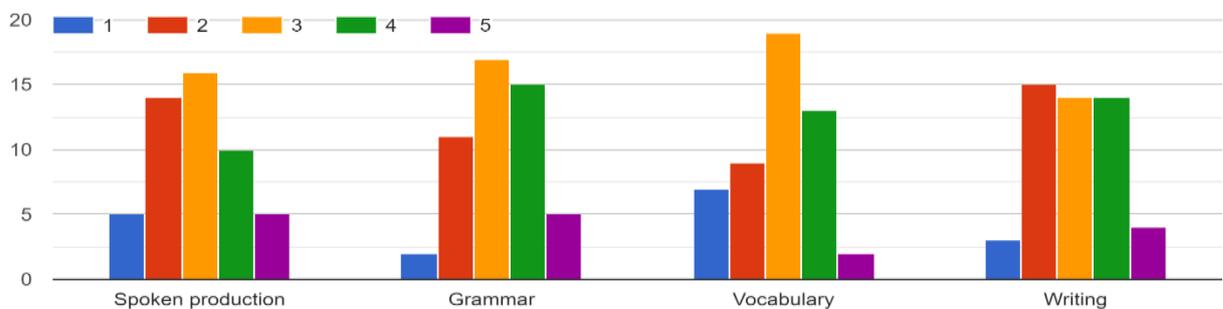


Figure 3.11: Students’ Language Proficiency After Engaging in Distance Learning

The Analysis of Q5 and Q6

These two questions are similarly designed to the pretest/posttest tool, but these questions do not include a treatment, since the only goal of **Q5** and **Q6** is to collect numerical data that will allow the researchers to determine the impact of e-learning on students' language proficiency (Academic Performance). In order to achieve that, the researchers used Microsoft Excel to calculate the differences between students' rates (After-Before) of the four language aspects above.

After calculating the differences, we calculated the means of the differences of the four language aspects. The table below shows how we can determine the nature of impact:

Mean < 0	Mean = 0	Mean > 0
Negative Impact	No Impact	Positive Impact

Table 3.2: The Impact of e-learning on Students' Language Proficiency

The Impact of Distance Learning on Students' Speaking Skill

<i>Students' Speaking Skill</i>	
Mean	-0,02
Standard Error	0,167794821
Median	0,5
Mode	1
Range	4
Minimum	-2
Maximum	2
Sum	-1
Count	50
Confidence Level(95,0%)	0,337196318

Table 3.3: Mean Result of Students' Speaking Skill

The mean's difference is equal to (-0,02) which is less than 0. Therefore, based on **Table 3.2**, there is a negative impact on EFL students' speaking skill before and after studying online.

The Impact of Distance Learning on Students' Grammar

<i>Students' Grammar Level</i>	
Mean	-0,408163265
Standard Error	0,119943182
Median	0
Mode	0
Range	4
Minimum	-2
Maximum	2
Sum	-20
Count	50
Confidence Level(95,0%)	0,24116193

Table 3.4: Mean Result of Students' Grammar

The mean's difference is equal to approximately (-0,41) which is less than 0.

Therefore, based on **Table 3.2**, there is a negative impact on EFL students' grammar before and after studying online.

The Impact of Distance Learning on Students' Vocabulary

<i>Students' Vocabulary</i>	
Mean	-0,3
Standard Error	0,134771159
Median	0
Mode	0
Range	6
Minimum	-3
Maximum	3
Sum	-15
Count	50
Confidence Level(95,0%)	0,270832784

Table 3.5: Mean Result of Students' Vocabulary

The mean's difference is equal to (-0,3) which is less than 0. Therefore, based on **Table 3.2**, there is a negative impact on EFL students' vocabulary before and after studying online.

The Impact of Distance Learning on Students' Writing Skill

<i>Students' Writing Skill</i>	
Mean	-0,28
Standard Error	0,153967927
Median	0
Mode	0
Range	7
Minimum	-3
Maximum	4
Sum	-14
Count	50
Confidence Level(95,0%)	0,309410133

Table 3.6: Mean Result of Students' Writing Skill

The mean's difference is equal to (-0,28) which is less than 0. Therefore, based on **Table 3.2**, there is a negative impact on EFL students' writing skill before and after studying online.

Based on the analysis of the data gathered from **Q5** and **Q6**, the researchers noticed that there is a negative impact on EFL students' academic performance after the shift to distance education.

Q7. How well could you manage time while learning remotely? Consider 5 being extremely well and 1 being not at all.

This question was created by the researchers to discover how EFL students handled their time when engaged in remote learning. The data collected from this question will be analyzed to figure out whether time management was an issue for EFL students.

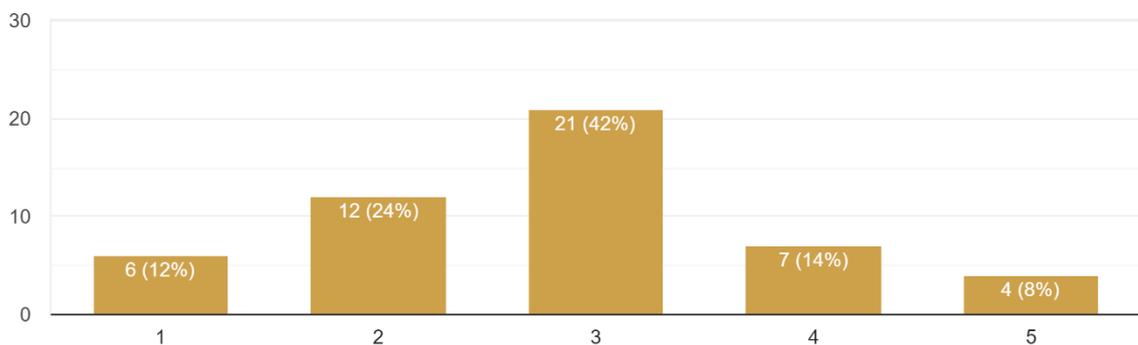


Figure 3.12: EFL Students' Time Management in Distance Learning.

The result from the analysis of this question as displayed in **Figure 3.12** shows that nearly half of our sample (21 students) handled their time in efficient manner in distance learning (42%). Additionally, During the distant learning period, (11) students effectively managed their time (22%). However, during the remote learning period, (18) students did not manage their time properly (36%).

Q8. Did you face any problems/challenges while studying online?

The purpose of this question is to determine whether EFL students encountered challenges/problems in online language learning.

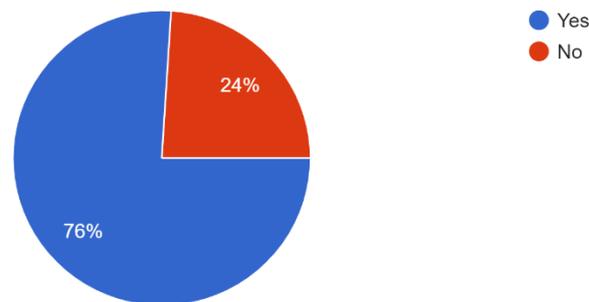


Figure 3.13: The Proportion of EFL Students Who Faced Issues in Distance Education

The analysis of the data collected from this question shows that (76%) of EFL students faced challenges in online education, while (24%) claimed that they did not face any challenges.

A follow up question: If yes, please state the challenges that you have faced in online learning as an EFL student?

This open-ended question will allow the researchers to learn more about the types of issues that EFL students faced in online education. Based on the students' answers, we classified the problems faced by EFL students as follows:

- EFL students complained that they only had written learning materials (PDFs).
- EFL students mentioned that they could not study properly due to distractions at home.
- Some students claimed that distance learning is tedious and monotonous.
- EFL students stated that they had technical issues and trouble with the Internet flow.
- Several students mentioned that they did not have access to learning platforms.

Q9. How helpful was your teachers while studying online?

Distance language learning has its own set of issues due to the lack of proximity with teachers. Some students may struggle with a subject and require additional assistance to comprehend it. This question will allow the researchers to determine the extent to which students find their teachers helpful.

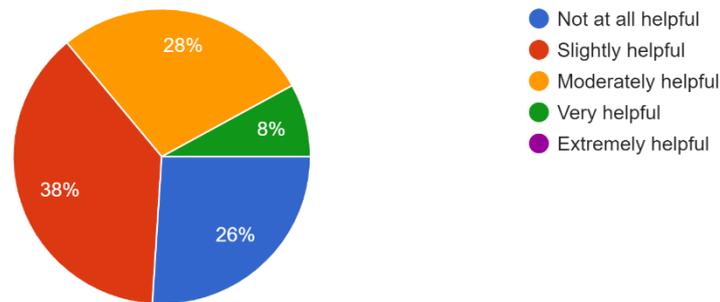


Figure 3.14: EFL Students' Feedback about EFL Teachers' Helpfulness in e-Learning

The figure above shows that (38%) of EFL students from our sample found their EFL teachers slightly helpful in distance language education. (28%) of the students claimed that their EFL teachers were moderately helpful, and (26%) students mentioned that teachers were not helpful at all, while only (8%) of students found their teachers very helpful.

A follow up question: Please explain why?

Based on the students' responses to this open-ended question, the researchers will be able to learn more about the student-teacher relation in remote education. To make distance education comfortable and productive, teachers should provide complete support to students. They should provide academic and emotional assistance to keep students motivated and invested in remote learning. Teachers should give more flexibility and create less strict regulations in light of the pandemic situation.

Based on the data gathered from this question, students expressed their dissatisfaction with the lack of variety in educational resources. During distance learning, several students claim that teachers only used textual materials (pdfs), and very few teachers delivered lessons through YouTube videos; students stated *“most of the teachers were only posting pdfs. I personally could not ask any of the questions I had in mind. I only googled what I did not understand. None of them arranged an online session as far as I remember. My colleagues from other groups had teachers who made youtube videos unlike my teachers”*.

Aside from the issue of the lack of variety of learning materials, there was also a lack of interaction and communication among teachers themselves, as well as with students. Some instructors, according to numerous students, take a long time to reply to students' emails or concerns, or do not respond at all; students claim that *“many teachers do not respond fast to their emails if they ever do respond; asking questions can be hard when studying online. Secondly, teachers tend to give homework the last minute; for example, we have 2 weeks staying at home, but they wait until 3 days left. Thirdly, teachers are not using one platform to provide studying materials, some day they use Moodle and the other they use several different Facebook groups. That is not okey because some students who are counting on Moodle will miss out on the lessons posted in Facebook”*.

Furthermore, several students claim that the distance learning evaluation was unfair. Some students simply copy-paste each other's assignments, which is unfair to others who work hard. Students state that *“I don't think that evaluation was fair because most of students just copy paste each other's answers”*.

Lastly, some students praised their professors' efforts and had a positive attitude toward them. According to a student *“Despite them all, some teachers were incredibly active and organized in sharing and explaining lectures”*.

Q10. Do you agree that online learning is an effective alternative to face-to-face learning?

This final question was designed by researchers for the purpose of getting EFL students' perspective on the efficacy of remote learning based on their experience.

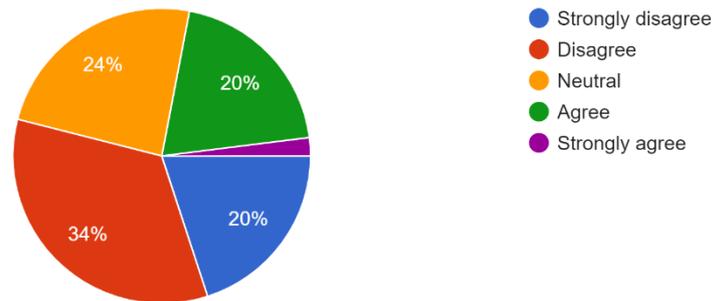


Figure 3.15: Students' Perspective on the Efficacy of Remote Learning for Foreign Language Teaching

As the chart above illustrates, the majority of students from our sample disagree that online learning is an effective substitute to face-to-face language instruction. However, (20%) of student believe that it may be successful, while (24%) of the students were neutral.

3.3.2.4 Discussion and Interpretation of the Findings

Researchers deduced the following from the analysis of the data gathered from the students' questionnaire:

The findings provided different and rich information that supported our study hypotheses. Initially, from EFL students' responses, we found out that the majority of EFL students were instructed online due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Furthermore, EFL students expressed mixed feelings about the entire experience of shifting from face-to-face education to distance learning. In distance education, half of the students (50%) had an average to good experience; however, the other half of the students (50%) had a below average to poor experience throughout online education. We believe that

these disparities are attributable to the fact that some students encountered issues that other students did not go through, such as a slow Internet connection; some students have access to high-quality Internet depending on where they reside, yet the students who reside in rural locations lack adequate Internet coverage. Besides, the intricacy of Internet platforms is another issue that some EFL students confront. Some students are more technologically savvy than others. Finally, the fact that EFL students have a range of learning styles contributed to these disparities in remote learning experiences. In contrast to other students, some EFL students were happy with remote learning since it suited their preferences.

In a similar vein, we discovered that (28%) of EFL students do not own or share a device for instructional purposes, based on their feedback. We think that if students share the device they use for education with others or are unable to access it when it is required, they will be less organized and distracted, which will negatively influence their learning process. Besides that, (68%) of students use their cellphones for educational purposes. We believe that students who use smartphones for studying will be distracted by notifications from other apps, especially when smartphones lack the functionality of laptops or desktop computers.

Moreover, from the analysis of the numerical data of the students' language proficiency before and after the engagement, we found out that the shift to language distance education and the challenges faced had a negative effect on the students' academic performance. The results indicate the following:

- The mean's difference of students' speaking skill is equal to (-0,02).
- The mean's difference of students' grammar is equal to approximately (-0,4)
- The mean's difference of students' vocabulary is equal to (-0,3)
- The mean's difference of students' writing skill is equal to (-0,2)

The results above validate our second hypothesis that the challenges faced by EFL teachers have a significant impact on EFL students' academic performance.

Moreover, we observed that (76%) of EFL students had difficulties during their distant language instruction experience. Students indicated their dissatisfaction with the learning materials delivered by teachers based on the data obtained. We discussed the necessity of having a range of learning resources in order to accommodate students' learning styles in this study's literature review. Thus, some students may find remote learning tedious and monotonous since it is not quite interesting to several students. Aside from that, EFL students reported technical issues and problems with the Internet flow; we believe that these technical issues may frustrate students and cause them to feel disconnected from the learning process.

As a result, the aforementioned points validate our third hypothesis about the major problems faced by EFL students in online language learning.

3.4 Data Analysis and Procedures

The obtained data were analyzed once the data gathering tools had been designed and implemented. The researchers used a descriptive approach to data analysis in this study in order to describe and interpret the data gathered from both EFL teachers' interviews and students' questionnaires in order to understand the main challenges that both EFL teachers and students face, as well as their impact on students' language proficiency.

3.5 Summary of the Results

As a recapitulation, the present research has been conducted in order to investigate the major challenges encountered by EFL teachers and students in remote learning, as well as their impact on students' language proficiency. In order to get the desired results, the researchers employed a variety of tools to collect data that enriched the study. A questionnaire administered to EFL students and an interview conducted with EFL teachers.

On the one hand, the interview findings revealed the major challenges encountered by EFL teachers in distance education. Based on the data gathered from the teachers' interviews, we categorized these challenges into seven (07) main challenges, and we calculated the frequency of occurrence of these challenges among teachers as follows:

- **Time Management:** 5%
- **Learners' Engagement:** 18%
- **Gadget-related Challenges:** 14%
- **Learners' Motivation:** 27%
- **Administrative Challenges:** 9%
- **Technological Literacy:** 23%
- **Setting (time & place):** 5%

In the same sense, the conducted interview showed that a substantial majority of teachers strongly agree that the challenges they have experienced in distance learning have had an impact on learners' academic performance.

On the other hand, the students' questionnaire results agreed with the teachers interview results. Based on the data gathered from the students' questionnaire, EFL students have also encountered problems during their remote learning process. The problems that EFL students face/encounter are the following:

- EFL students complained that they only had written learning materials (PDFs).
- EFL students mentioned that they could not study properly due to distractions at home.
- Some students claimed that distance learning is tedious and monotonous.

- EFL students stated that they had technical issues and trouble with the Internet flow.
- Several students mentioned that they did not have access to learning platforms.

Correspondingly, the results of the questionnaire revealed that EFL students, like teachers, disagree that remote learning is not a viable alternative to face-to-face language instruction in Algeria, confirming our final hypothesis that online learning is less effective than face-to-face language instruction in Algeria. To recap, we believe that remote learning in Algeria is available as a supplement, not a replacement/substitute/substitution.

3.6 Synthesis of the Findings

The progress of this synthesis is based on the findings acquired from the tools applied. Both tools yielded results that were similar, assisting in answering the study questions and validating the hypothesis regarding the primary challenges EFL teachers and students encountered in distance education, as well as their effects on the students' academic performance.

The four study questions and hypotheses were addressed and validated by both research tools. We observed that the issues experienced by EFL teachers are connected to the difficulties or problems faced by students based on the data obtained from both instruments. Teachers were unable to arrange online sessions or develop audio-visual materials due to their technical illiteracy, time management skills, and lack of gadget; consequently, teachers ended up providing students with just textual language materials.

Additionally, both EFL teachers and students experienced similar problems, such as the problem of technical issues and poor Internet flow, which led to the lack of interaction between teachers and their students.

3.7 Limitations of the Study

Any researcher is aware of the several roadblocks that may obstruct the development of a study in some way. During the course of our investigation, certain roadblocks arose that prevented us from obtaining additional relevant data for our research.

Firstly, when conducting a study for the first time, without having any prior research expertise proved to be a challenge. Furthermore, a lack of resources was a major concern because online learning is a relatively new idea, with just a few research on foreign language education in e-learning.

Secondly, the Corona virus pandemic has a huge detrimental effect. Therefore, the data gathering procedure was significantly disrupted owing to the grouping system implemented in institutions. We did not have access to many of students and professors.

Lastly, the researcher emailed all instructors; however, only few agreed to cooperate, the procedure of reaching them was quite difficult due to their packed schedules.

3.8 Conclusion

The third chapter was devoted to the fieldwork of the study, and consisted of two parts. The first section focused on the theoretical underpinning of the employed research methodology, this part covered the research approach, the research design, population, sampling, and data collection procedures. The goal of the second section was to look into the major challenges that EFL teachers and students encountered in distance language learning, as well as their impact on the students' academic performance. In addition, this chapter covered in-depth data analysis, interpretation, discussion, and synthesis of the findings.

General Conclusion

The present study explored EFL teachers' and students' challenges during the sudden implementation of technology for online language classrooms during coronavirus pandemic at the level of the English Language Branch of University Mohamed Khider of Biskra; Algeria. In addition to the impact of these challenges on EFL students' academic performance. Thus, this study attempted to answer all the research questions, as well as the validity of its hypotheses.

The present study is laid out under three chapters. The first chapter is an introductory chapter where the researcher provides an overview of online learning; its definitions, types, advantages/disadvantages, and the most common online platforms. The second chapter highlighted the challenges that teachers face in DLL and their solutions based on literature. The third chapter was devoted to the fieldwork of the study, and consisted of two parts. The first section focused on the theoretical underpinning of the employed research methodology. The second section covered the data analysis interpretation, in addition to the discussion and summary of the findings.

In order to achieve the study's aims, the researchers used a mixed-methods approach (quantitative and qualitative approaches) because it serves the nature of the study. More significantly, the chosen method allowed the researchers to learn about the attitudes of Algerian teachers and learners about e-learning in the Algerian educational system.

The results revealed that teachers encountered several challenges during their distance language instruction. EFL teachers faced the following challenges: Time Management, learners' engagement, gadget-related challenges, learners' motivation, administrative challenges, technological literacy, setting (the learning environment). Moreover, EFL students have also encountered problems during their remote learning process. The problems that EFL students face/encounter are the following: The lack of variety in the learning

materials, the access to decent-quality Internet and technological devices, students' learning preferences, and the access to distance learning platforms. Furthermore, the researchers concluded that the challenges faced by both EFL teachers and students had a negative impact on students' academic performance.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A: Teachers' Interview

Faculty of Letters and Foreign Languages Department of Foreign Languages English Division

Teachers' Interview

This interview aims at attaining information and insight about the challenges that Algerian EFL teachers encounter in distance learning, and the impact of these challenges on learners' academic performance.

Questions

1. How did you manage the unpredictable shift from traditional, face-to-face learning to distance learning during the COVID-19 pandemic?

.....
.....
.....

2. Did you face any challenges in distance learning?

.....

3. If yes, what were the major challenges you faced in online classes?

.....
.....
.....

4. How did you deal with these challenges?

.....
.....
.....

5. How did these challenges affect your learners' academic performance?

.....
.....
.....
.....

6. Do you agree that online learning in Algeria is less effective than face-to-face learning, especially when it comes to language teaching? Why?

.....
.....
.....

7. Do you have any additional information or suggestions you wish to share?

.....
.....
.....

Thank you for your feedback!

Appendix B: Students' Questionnaire

Students' Questionnaire about the Challenges that Face Students in E-learning in Algeria.

Dear students,

You are kindly requested to answer the following questionnaire that is designed to investigate about the challenges that are encountered in distance learning by EFL learners in Algeria.

This study will help us make improvements to students' learning experience in e-learning. The questionnaire should only take 10 minutes, and your responses are completely anonymous.

Your contribution will be useful for the success of this research, so please try to choose the appropriate options that suit you with a clear justification when it is required.

We really appreciate your input!

1. Have you studied online at Mohamed Khider University during COVID-19 pandemic? *

Yes

No

2. If yes, how was your overall experience with e-learning as an EFL student? *

Poor

Below Average

Average

Good

Excellent

Please explain why? *

Long answer text



3. Do you have access to a device for learning online? *

- Yes
- Yes, but it does not work well
- No, I share with others

4. What device do you use for distance learning? *

Feel free to choose multiple answers in this question

- Laptop
- Desktop
- Tablet
- Smartphone

5. Rate your level in the following language aspects before studying online (during face-to-face ^{*} classes).

Note that number one (1) is Novice, and number five (5) is Advanced.

	1	2	3	4	5
Spoken product...	<input type="radio"/>				
Grammar	<input type="radio"/>				
Vocabulary	<input type="radio"/>				
Writing	<input type="radio"/>				

6. Rate your level in the following language aspects after studying online. ^{*}

Note that number one (1) is Novice, and number five (5) is Advanced.

	1	2	3	4	5
Spoken product...	<input type="radio"/>				
Grammar	<input type="radio"/>				
Vocabulary	<input type="radio"/>				
Writing	<input type="radio"/>				

7. How well could you manage time while learning remotely? *

Consider 5 being extremely well and 1 being not at all

	1	2	3	4	5	
Not at all	<input type="radio"/>	Extremely well				

8. Did you face any problems/challenges while studying online? *

- Yes
- No

⋮

If yes, please state the challenges that you have faced in online learning as an EFL student? *

Long answer text

9. How helpful was your teachers while studying online? *

- Not at all helpful
- Slightly helpful
- Moderately helpful
- Very helpful

- Slightly helpful
- Moderately helpful
- Very helpful
- Extremely helpful

Please explain why? *

Note: This is a friendly reminder that your responses are completely anonymous.

Long answer text

Do you agree that online learning is an effective alternative to face-to-face learning? *

- Strongly disagree
- Disagree
- Neutral
- Agree
- Strongly agree

Appendix C : Teachers' Consent

Consent for Participation in Interview Research

I volunteer to participate in a research project conducted by Mr. Mohamed Laid DAMBRI, supervised by Dr. Mehiri Ramadane from Mohamed Khider University. I understand that the project is designed to gather information about the challenges that Algerian EFL teachers encounter in distance learning, and the impact of these challenges on students' academic performance. I will be one of approximately 10 teachers being interviewed for this research.

1. My participation in this study is voluntary. I understand that I will not be paid for my participation. I may withdraw and discontinue participation at any time without penalty.
2. Participation involves being interviewed by master student from Mohamed Khider University. The interview will last approximately 15 minutes. Notes will be written during the interview. An audio tape of the interview and subsequent dialogue will be made. If I don't want to be taped, I will not be able to participate in the study.
3. I understand that the researcher will not identify me by name in any reports using information obtained from this interview, and that my confidentiality as a participant in this study will remain secure. Subsequent uses of records and data will be subject to standard data use policies which protect the anonymity of individuals and institutions.
4. I have read and understand the explanation provided to me. I have had all my questions answered to my satisfaction, and I voluntarily agree to participate in this study.

My Signature

Date

Résumé

Le progrès technologique a permis aux enseignants de langues de jouir d'avantages divers sur le plan technique, notamment, l'utilisation de plateformes et d'outils numériques en vue d'améliorer les compétences linguistiques de leurs apprenants. Et cela en des situations difficiles tel que la crise épidémique de la COVID-19.

Dans ce sens, cette recherche vise à examiner et décortiquer les défis auxquels sont confrontés les professeurs et apprenants de EFL lors du recours à l'enseignement-apprentissage ligne durant l'épidémie du coronavirus, précisément, en Algérie. Or, les universités algériennes, à l'instar des établissements d'enseignement supérieur, ont dû être fermées afin de prévenir les éventuelles retombées sanitaires du virus.

En effet, le corpus choisi pour cette étude correspond à cinq (05) enseignants de EFL, ainsi que cinquante (50) étudiants du département de langue anglaise de l'Université Mohamed Khider de Biskra.

Enfin, ce travail de recherche est une étude exploratoire à méthodes mixtes, outillée par des questionnaire et entretiens afin d'explorer les défis de l'éducation en ligne et leurs impacts sur les performances académiques des élèves.

المخلص

أتاح التقدم التكنولوجي لمعلمي اللغة الاستمتاع بمزايا تقنية مختلفة ، بما في ذلك استخدام المنصات والأدوات الرقمية لتحسين المهارات اللغوية لمتعلميهم. وهذا في المواقف الصعبة مثل أزمة وباء COVID-19 بهذا المعنى ، يهدف هذا البحث إلى فحص وتشريح التحديات التي يواجهها معلمي ومتعلمي اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية عند استخدام التدريب المهني عبر الإنترنت أثناء وباء فيروس كورونا ، وتحديدًا في الجزائر. ومع ذلك ، كان لابد من إغلاق الجامعات الجزائرية ، مثل مؤسسات التعليم العالي ، من أجل منع التداعيات الصحية المحتملة للفيروس. في الواقع ، المجموعة المختارة لهذه الدراسة تتوافق مع خمسة (05) مدرسين للغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية ، بالإضافة إلى خمسين (50) طالبًا من قسم اللغة الإنجليزية بجامعة محمد خضر بسكرة. أخيرًا ، يعد هذا العمل البحثي دراسة استكشافية باستخدام طرق مختلطة ومجهزة باستبيانات ومقابلات لاستكشاف تحديات التعليم عبر الإنترنت وتأثيرها على الأداء الأكاديمي للطلاب.