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MASTER THESIS

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**The impact of online English language courses on EFL learners' oral
proficiency. The case study of third year students of English at University**

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Sciences of Language

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Declaration

I, HAZRECHE MOHAMED SOHEIB, do hereby declare solemnly that this submitted work is solely my own effort, and has not previously been submitted for any institution or university for a degree.

Soheib

Abstract

The present study investigates EFL learners attitudes towards online learning in enhancing their oral proficiency. It aimed to shed light on the effectiveness of the online method In developing the oral skills and the attitudes of learners towards this mode of learning. In order to test the hypothesis of this study, a qualitative approach is used to gather and analyze data. A semi structured questionnaire was administered to forty third year EFL learners at the department of English at Mohamed Kheider University of Biskra. In the light of the obtained results, students have positive attitudes toward online learning in developing their oral proficiency, they consider it effective because it helps them express themselves and interact more freely in an easy way, and develop their oral skills in an individualized environment, at their own pace and time. As EFL learners, they encounter difficulties in using this new method such as time management, unfamiliarity with the online learning technologies, poor network connection, in addition to limited interaction between students and their teachers.

Key words: Online learning, Oral proficiency, English learners.

Dedication

First and for most, I praise Allah for showing me the way and giving me strength through

the long road of this piece of research;

To my beloved mother, whose love, encouragement, and support were my source of

Inspiration,

To my dearest father who did everything for me to be here today,

To my brother: Omar Elmokhtar,

To my sisters: Afaf, Fatima and Amani,

To my friends,

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List of Abbreviations

CoI: Community of Inquiry

DVD: Digital video disk

EFL: English Foreign Language

HEIs: Higher Education Institutions

ICT: Information and communication technology

NCSA: Next College Student Athlete (teaching company)

OPI: Oral proficiency interview

PDAs: Personal digital assistant

QM: Quality Matters

SCMC: Symbiosis center for media and communication

VLEs: Virtual Learning Environments

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General Introduction

GENERAL INTRODUCTION

Introduction

Over the recent years, the world witnessed a wide shift from the conventional teaching and learning to modes where technology and the Internet play an important key role in raising learners' awareness providing knowledge and facilitating the English language learning.

The process of using technology for language learning has made both teachers and students able to explore the efficiency of the on-line learning approach. The different on-line platforms provided by computer-based studies help learners to develop practising their language fluency abilities as their direct or face to face classroom interaction or learning times are limited. The limited learning hours in classes affect the second language learners and minimize the developing concept of their fluency.

Nowadays concern is how can on-line learning help to enhance the speaking skill abilities of learners. It is worth noting that, since the 1960s and 1970s, one of the most prominent concerns in language learning and education has been the communicative value of language (Littlewood, 2007; Richards & Rodgers 2014). Learning speaking skills is the most important aspect of learning a second or foreign language since success in learning a language is decided by the ability to have good conversations (Nunan, 1995).

Statement of the Problem

In today's Algeria, the English language has taken on a vital role. According to Benrabah (2002) "English has been gaining dominance in a number of sectors: the oil industry, computing and scientific and technological documentation" (p.16).

The use of online learning approach has a remarkably increased of the Algerian universities in the recent years due to the covid-19 pandemic and the ministry of education

demands to use the internet platforms for education. It is undeniable that online learning provides a lot of benefits for both teachers and learners. Nevertheless, students didn't find much difficulties in learning online, inversely, they declared on the same thing that is online education offered more flexibility and helped them being available at work which increased the teachers instructions and encouraging Learners via email discussion.

In connection with the points previously mentioned, this study aims to explore the EFL learners at attitudes towards using online learning and its potential role in promoting learners' speaking skill and their fluency growth.

Research Questions

This research is willing to answer the following questions:

RQ1: What is the students attitudes towards the online learning approach ?

RQ2: How does the online learning process impact on the EFL students oral proficiency development?

RQ3: Are EFL students satisfied with the quality of teaching and the way English language is taught on online platforms?

Research Hypothesis

Based on the above-mentioned research questions, the hypothesis is:

If the learners use online learning approach in learning, they will find convenience in studying with time effectiveness and improvement in participation and increases the discussion duration with improving its quality and fosters the interaction. However, they will face technological issues and poor internet quality.

Aims of the Study

General aim

This study aims to investigate the efficacy of the online learning in teaching EFL learners and its influence on the oral proficiency development in students at Mohamed Khider University.

Specific aims

1. Gather the students' feedback from studying EFL in online classes.
2. Investigate whether online teaching can benefit in developing learners' oral proficiency or not.
3. To what extent do Algerian EFL learners participate and get engaged with their teachers and peers in online courses.

Significance of the Study

This study seeks to scout about the validation of the online learning approach that may impact on the oral proficiency development on EFL learners at the university of Mohamed Khider of Biskra. In addition, It offers important information and data that could assist instructors to better understand learners' interests, attitudes with the expectations about the online learning environment into the bargain. It is also a call for attention to the improvement and exploitation of online educational platforms in Algeria.

Research Methodology

The choice of Method

Our research study seeks to gain insight about online courses and to determine their effectiveness. It is designed to analyse the benefits, drawbacks, and strategies of online learning courses and to investigate its effects on the EFL learners' oral proficiency.

Therefore, we opt for a descriptive qualitative approach for this research through collecting qualitative data and interpreting it descriptively.

Population and Sample

The population of the study is 273 third year students of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) at the Department of English at Mohamed Khider University during the academic year 2021/2022. The total selected number is forty students from the students' population. This students were familiar with online learning since the Corona-virus pandemic. The reasons of their contribution in this research is to check whether they support the use of online courses in their learning journey and if they witnessed a development in their oral proficiency skills comparing to face to face classes. Another reason behind the choice of this population is that they are in a critical period to get their license and then study the master degree.

Data Collection Tool

In order to achieve the outcomes of the present research, we decided on a semi structured questionnaire as a data collection tool to be submitted to the students.

Structure of the Study

This study is going to be divided into three chapters:

Chapter One

The first chapter displays a theoretical background of online learning where definitions of online learning are provided by several writers and scholars. It reveals the various benefits and drawbacks of online learning. This chapter also deals with the barriers facing the online learning courses adoption.

Chapter Two

The second chapter attempts to deal with online learning courses implemented in

higher education in general and EFL classrooms in specific. It discusses the importance of online learning and the teacher's role besides accounting for its impact on the student's fluency development.

Chapter Three

The last chapter will be devoted to the practical part of this research where the students' questionnaires are described and analyzed.

Limitations of the Study

Online learning is a new educational system for the Algerian educational system which is still in its infancy stage. Algerian universities are far from having fully integrated online courses in their curriculum and therefore the respondents in this study did not have adequate and sufficient experience with the online learning approach. The results of the analysis of the findings have indicated that our hypothesis which is supported; that is to say, that using online courses in the EFL context would motivate and help students to develop their speaking skills

Nevertheless, this study has some limitations. Time limitations is the first barrier. A longer period would allow us to make use of various techniques, and a larger sample of students at the Department of English at the University of Biskra. This would give our results different dimensions.

The second limitation was the lack of references. We have not found the necessary information concerning the theme we investigated and the lack of previous studies on the topic narrowed the scope of the current study.

The final limitation which we faced is the number of sample. We have found difficulties in gathering the data from the learners due to studying week by week. The number of sample

(15%) would not represent the whole population, thus it is difficult to generalize these conclusions.

Delimitations of the Study

According to Zolghadri and Mallahi (2013), the most critical financial barriers are insufficient investment, a lack of funds and sustainable investment devoted to a program/project, and budget squandering. In terms of decision making, an insufficient number of University Directors demonstrating knowledge and experience in modern teaching technologies can also be a barrier to online learning adoption. Other obstacles addressed were a lack or inadequacy of incentives to encourage online learning education and a lack of training on the usage of online learning technologies (Panda and Mishra, 2007; Zolghadri and Mallahi, 2013; Al Gamdi and Samarji, 2016).

Chapter One

Online Learning

CHAPTER 1: ONLINE LEARNING

Introduction

Technology has made a substantial influence not just on social life, but also on the educational systems, setting the way for a new academic learning system. In this regard, online learning has grown significantly in recent years, with online classes becoming more popular in Algeria. Thus, online learning as a technology-mediated learning approach was integrated into many university courses in the world.

Today, technology particularly the internet, is providing benefits to the educational system, and universities are now making adjustments to integrate internet platforms by what they call (online learning) for the sake of developing the teaching/learning process, particularly today's learning and teaching, where attendance at university has become a danger to students and professors due to the corona pandemic in the last years. The movement to online-based instruction has grown steadily over the past decade as universities around the world now offer online courses in a range of topics, which in turn allow students to attend classes without requiring attendance at a physical campus (Means, Bakia, & Murphy, 2014). Even if students and teachers do not meet directly at university, the learning process continue online through internet platforms. Teachers can still deliver the teaching material, and students can still receive the lesson without leaving their homes" (Leli Efriana 2021, p.2).

In most countries, online courses are meant to improve teacher-student contact, and teachers think about how to produce high quality online courses and keep students engaged through online text, videos, and interactivity. Students can use online resources to prepare lessons instead of reading books from the library, and teachers can invite students to take

online courses in addition to face-to-face sessions. The student will be given information first, then attend classes to discuss what they have learned so far.

Since our research is about the impact of online teaching on EFL learner's oral proficiency, this chapter provide insights about online learning and its definition, and we described its characteristics and types, also we discussed its advantages and disadvantages and its modes of delivery.

Definition of Online Learning

Online learning, also known as e-learning is considered the most modern sort of distance education that takes place over the internet. The term e-learning refers to electronic learning in general; it is used now to characterize the use of computer technology to enhance the learning process, especially in higher education, where university students rely more on computers for learning.

The concept of E-Learning is very broad. It was conceived at the end of the 1990s as a huge technological advance that had enhanced learning mechanisms through the Internet. Currently e-learning is considered to have involved a wide range of multimedia tools such as internet, interactive television and all forms of electronic support, among others, all of which favours learning and makes it more flexible and friendlier (Kakoty et al., 2011).

Online learning is closely lined with ICT. Consequently, Clarke (2004) affirmed that “e-Learning is a general term covering many different approaches that have in common the use of information and communication technology” (p. 2). Therefore, online learning is ICT-based system by nature that many higher education institutions are using Information and Communication Technology (ICT) to develop course materials, deliver and share the course

content, lectures and presentations, facilitate communication among lecturers and students, conduct research and provide administrative and management services (Soong, 2012).

Dhull and Arora (2017) defined online learning as

learning that comprises a range of technologies such as the worldwide web, email, chat, new groups and texts, audio and video conferencing delivered over computer networks to impart education, it helps the learner to learn at their own pace, according to their own convenience. (p.32)

Jones (2003) states that whether saying “e-learning, digital learning, computer enhanced learning, no matter which tag is applied, all aim to exploit web-based technology to improve learning for students” (p. 66).

There are various synonyms for e-learning that reflect the same idea, these are: computer-based learning, computer-assisted instruction, electronic learning, technology-enhanced learning, technology based learning, Web-based learning, Internet-based learning, Advanced distributed learning, Web-based instruction, Online learning, Network learning, Distance learning. (Khan, 2005; Romiszowski, 2004).

The NCSA e-Learning group presents an alternative definition for e-learning:

The acquisition and use of knowledge distributed and facilitated primarily by electronic means. This form of learning currently depends on networks and computers but will likely evolve into systems consisting of a variety of channels (e.g., wireless, satellite), and technologies (e.g., cellular phones, PDAs) as they are developed and adopted. E-learning can take the form of courses as well as modules and smaller learning objects. E-learning may incorporate synchronous or asynchronous access and may be distributed geographically with varied

limits of time-(as cited in Alkharang, 2014, p. 22).

According to Wan, Wang, Haggerty (2008) online learning is “a virtual learning environment in which a learner’s interactions with materials, peers and instructors are mediated through information and communication technologies”. Whereas Elliot (2009) defines e-learning as the “rise of network technology to design, deliver, select, administer, and extend learning”.

Finally, based on online teaching services students can attend their lectures using a computer or a smart phone. Online learning uses a variety of networks to communicate with teachers, including Facebook, e-mail, and What's Up. Teachers deliver their activities, tests, and all videos for students to study and analyse, thus everything must be done on a computer or a smart phone, as Susan Ko, Steve Rossen (2010) mentioned

It’s a form of distance education, a process that traditionally included courses taught through the mail, by DVD, or via telephone or TV—any form of learning that doesn’t involve the traditional classroom setting in which students and instructor must be in the same place at the same time. (p26).

Online Learning of The Foreign Language

Learning Foreign Languages

Learning a foreign language is a worldwide educational practice. Learners are supposed to improve the four skills by learning a foreign language (writing, speaking, listening, and reading). According to Moeller and Catalano (2015) "foreign language learning and teaching relate to the teaching or learning of a non native language outside of the context in which it is typically spoken" (p. 327).

It is common to distinguish between a "foreign language" and a "second language." In this view, Eddy (2011) asserts explicitly that a foreign language is learned after the first

language. However, it is a personal choice rather than obligatory; in other words, it is up to the individual's preferences and interests. It is not essential for communication to take place in a person's native country or in a nation to which they have relocated (pp. 11-12). In the same sense, Peng (2019) defines a "second language" as "the language that serves the same function as a mother tongue." (p. 33).

Types of Learning Foreign Languages

Traditional classroom learning method. Face-to-face learning or traditional classroom learning is a teaching technique in which the teacher transmits information to his students in person, without the use of any other media. It occurs in the classroom when the teacher uses traditional educational tools such as the chalkboard, textbooks, and handouts. It assesses students' performance through homework, assignments, and tests. This technique is very engaging since it incorporates many classroom activities such as debates, group discussions, and group projects.

Online learning method. According to Ferri et al. (2020) online learning may be described as "instruction given on a digital device that is meant to assist learning" (p.2). It indicates that technology is employed as a learning medium. According to Anderson (2004) "learning and teaching in an online environment are much like any other educational context in that learners' needs are assessed, content is negotiated or prescribed, learning activities are coordinated, and learning is measured" (p. 273). Online learning is convenient and beneficial for students since it allows them to access learning resources whenever they want, without any constraints.

Evolution of Online Learning

A sequence of notable events occurred in the evolution of online learning. According to Bakia et al. (2012) online learning is defined as "instructional environments supported by the internet. Online learning comprises a wide variety of programs that use the internet within and beyond school walls to provide access to instructional materials as well as facilitate interaction among teachers and students" (p. 2). As per Hiltz and Turoff (1987), the first teaching online started in the early 1990s, based on the invention of computer conferencing by Murray Turoff in 1970" (p. 43). Harasim (2000) said that post-secondary institutions began experimenting with the use of computer conferencing for undergraduate course delivery in the mid-1980s. The virtual classroom project proposed by Roxanne Hiltz in the late 1980s was one of the most prominent of these pioneering works (pp.47-48). Also, Hiltz (1990) states that "the New Jersey Institute of Technology in the United States was one of the first universities to offer education using computer conferencing, using specially created computer conferencing software called Virtual Classroom" (p. 134).

Furthermore, Harasim (2000) observes

The invention of the World Wide Web in 1992 made online education increasingly accessible and allowed new pedagogical models to emerge, because the web is easy to use and capable of presenting multimedia, it expanded the range of disciplines that could be offered online. The 1980s and 1990s saw enormous innovation and expansion in online education and networking at all levels of education (...) thus the 21st century begins with a paradigm shift in attitudes towards online education. (p. 42)

Characteristics of Online Learning

While there are several methods for implementing an online component into a course, there are design elements that are common to most online curricula. Vai and Sosulski (2011) provide an overview of the essential elements of online course design. The four components they emphasize are differences in (a) learning space, (b) planning and delivery of course content, (c) communication, and (d) delayed feedback. A clear difference between a traditional classroom and an online classroom is the physical location (Vai & Sosulski, 2011).

The typical course setting needs the use of a classroom and students to meet together to receive instruction from the instructor. Web-based classrooms, on the other hand, are virtual; coursework may be performed wherever there is a computer and an Internet connection.

Students in traditional classes can communicate with their teacher or other colleagues face to face. Face-to-face interaction is, however, limited in specialized online classes. As a result, the majority of interaction between the student and the professor takes place online via written communication or Internet Protocol Telecommunication software such as Google meet. The majority of the instructor's feedback is delayed. However, the teacher is frequently available through email to answer concerns and explain guidelines and assignment information. As a consequence, it is important that the instructor anticipates students' questions and addresses them in his or her lecture or written instructions for assignments (Vai & Sosulski, 2011).

Modes of Delivery in Online Learning

Perveen (2016) classified delivery methods in online learning as follows:

Synchronous Learning

According to Perveen (2016), synchronous learning is the simultaneous delivery of teaching and learning via an electronic medium. Synchronous voice or text chatrooms allow for teacher-student and student-student interaction. Furthermore, video conferencing improves face-to-face communication (p. 22). One of the constraints that online synchronous learning imposes on both students and professors is the requirement that they are present at the same time and location so the learning process could begin. Further, Perveen (2016) believes that one of the obstacles to synchronous education is the required availability of high-bandwidth internet, which might cause participants to feel dissatisfied and incompetent due to technological issues (p. 23).

Asynchronous Learning

Asynchronous learning is defined as learning that does not need direct connection between the teacher and the students. According to Perveen (2016) "Asynchronous learning environments give students with ready-to-use information in the form of audio or video lectures, handouts, articles, and PowerPoint presentations that are accessible through the internet at any time and from any location, allowing them to work at their own speed" (p. 22).

Types of Interaction in Online Learning

Moore (1989) identified four main kinds of interactions:

Learner-Instructor Interaction

In a course, learner-instructor contact happens primarily between students and the teacher. Moore (1989) believes in this sense:

In this interaction, distance instructors attempt to achieve aims held in

common with all other educators. First having planned or given a curriculum, a program of content to be taught, they seek to stimulate or at least maintain the student's interest in what is to be taught. To motivate the student to learn, to enhance and maintain the learner's interest. To motivate the student to learn, to enhance and maintain the learner's interest[...]. Then, instructors make presentations or cause them to be made[...]. Next instructors try to organize students' application on what is being learned [...]. Instructors organize evaluation to ascertain if learners are making a progress [...]. Finally, Instructors provide counsel, support and encouragement to each learner. (p. 2)

Learner-instructor contact is important because it fosters a more helpful and stimulating atmosphere for students.

Learner-Learner Interaction

Online learning is not always focused on the instructor or the topic, but also on the other learners. In this regard, Moore (1989) mentioned that "learner-learner interaction is inter-learner interaction, between one learner and other learners, alone or in group settings, with or without real-time presence of an instructor" (p. 4). Learner-learner communication is significant because it encourages learners to engage dynamically and exchange information with one another and as well as enhance their critical thinking skills; hence, it is a useful resource for learning and improving the learner's knowledge.

Learner-Content Interaction

The most common type of interaction in online teaching is learner-content interaction. According to Moore (1989) learner-content interaction is "the process of intellectually interacting with content that results in changes in the learner's understanding, the learner's perspective, or the cognitive structures of the learner's mind" (p. 2). This type of

contact, as per Abrami et al. (2012) “may include reading informational texts for meaning, using study guides, watching instructional videos, interacting with multimedia, participating in simulations, or using cognitive support Software” (p. 8)

Advantages and Disadvantages of Online Learning

Advantages of Online Learning

According to Kim and Bonk (2006) “technology is playing an important role in developing learning process through online courses. Technologies assist in handling large number of students from different parts of the world and hence at an institutional level, learning using technologies may be considered as a cost effective teaching method” (p. 22). Online learning is seen as an efficient and beneficial learning method that supports any nation's educational development by creating a new generation of instructors and students whose teaching and learning processes are no longer constrained to a traditional classroom. As a result, many academics embrace the concept of online education for several factors.

Flexibility of time and place. Online learning provides a lot of flexibility.

Online learning allows students to attend classes whenever and wherever they want. Education is available when and where it is needed. E-learning can be done at the office, at home, on the road, 24 hours a day, and seven days a week (Afaneh, M., et Al (2006) (P23). Online courses are convenient since students can access them whenever it is convenient for them and they are driven to learn. Because there is no physical presence, students can take the course at any time and from any location which make online learning more cost effective than traditional learning because less time and money. Since e-learning can be done in any geographic location and there are no travel expenses, this type of learning is much less costly than doing learning at a traditional institute” (p23). It also allows learners with physical

disabilities or those who reside in rural villages to study from their own homes; all they need is a computer or Smart phone and access to the net.

Variety of programs and courses. Online learning provides a variety of programs students have numerous alternatives for selecting the program that best meets their interests and is helpful to their learning style and needs; they can simply select subjects and themes of interest. The professor can also provide resources, references to scholarly publications, and other items related to the topic of study to students. According to Afaneh, M., et al (2006) "E-learning encourages students to peruse through information by using hyperlinks and sites on the worldwide Web. Students are able to find information relevant to their personal situations and interest. E-learning allows students to select learning materials that meet their level of knowledge, interest and what they need to know to perform more effectively in an activity. E-learning is more focused on the learner and it is more interesting for the learner because it is information that they want to learn. E-learning is flexible and can be customized to meet the individual needs of learners" (p23).

Promoting learner's constructivism. According to Afaneh, M., et Al (2006), "E-learning helps students develop knowledge of the Internet. This knowledge will help learners throughout their careers. E-learning encourages students to take personal responsibility for their own learning. When learner's self-knowledge and self-confidence in them" (p23). Due to the teacher's lack of physical presence, online learning became student-centred, which allows learners to develop their thinking through various activities. Through distance learning technology's various programs, students manage how they develop their awareness and take the appropriate information and knowledge for their needs.

As per Mathew, I. R., & Ebele Iloanya, J. (2016), "According to various researchers, technology can promote critical thinking and problem-solving skills among learners which are required in the 21st century. Online lecturers can make use of various technologies such

as Google Docs, Discussion Forums in Blackboard and create various activities that can help to develop the critical skills of learners” (p2) (Mansbach, 2015).

Online learning improves learner retention by explaining concepts in the form of videos, graphics, documentaries, and so on. Online courses are more of a bottom - up development of knowledge that require learners to interact with one another and the content resources to construct their knowledge rather than relying on the trickle - down delivery of content from an instructor. This is actually good, as more research is indicating that lecturing is an inefficient way of learning. In most lectures, learners are too passive for much higher - level learning to occur” (McKeachie, Pint rich, Lin, & Smith 1986)

Interacting with more learners through collaboration. According to Judith v, Boettcher, and Rita-Marie Conrad (2010), “students in online teaching are more active, they make extra efforts when thinking, writing and sharing ideas, and peer reviewing as a part of the online community. Also they (authors) assumed that the learners cannot hide passively when they do their assignments, if they have not prepared and processed the content prior to posting their discussion, responses that shortcoming is evident for anyone” (p51). Online learning enables for dynamic interaction between the learner and the lecturer, as well as among learners. When thoughts and resources are exchanged, each person can participate to the course discussion by commenting on the opinions of others.

Zishan hong (2003) stated that “Distance education can be as effective as a traditional faceto-face classroom, when the technologies are used in an appropriated way, the learning and instructing methods are appropriated to learning objectives, and the interaction among students to students and students to teachers are used in the program, such as through chat room, bulletin boards, private mail, or a combination” (P5).

“Online environments have been considered potentially beneficial for L2 learning through telecollaboration practices in particular. Since the SCMC occurring between learners on

online language learning communities is a form of telecollaboration because it encourages the development of intercultural and communicative skills, it is necessary to provide a review of the main practices occurred in the literature in order to explain how this research aims to contribute to the field” (Marialuis anlerba candilio) (p51).

Disadvantages of Online Learning

Despite the various benefits of online learning, it has drawbacks like any other teaching approach. According to Asaqli (2020), e-learning may limit social and cultural connections, obstruct communication methods such as body language, eliminate peer-to-peer learning, and cause impersonality issues. Because online learning allows students to learn without having to be physically present in the classroom, it may be challenging for these students to make social interactions. Furthermore, the sense of isolation and separation from the social environment heightens feelings of dissatisfaction. Indeed, a lack of human interaction and belonging impacts negatively on the intellectual and social learning development and achievement.

According to Dhull and Arora (2017), “In online learning, one does not have the opportunity to have face-to face interaction with the teacher which is very significant for establishing a bond between the student and the teacher” (p. 33). Furthermore, Dhull and Arora (2017) think that in online learning, students lack motivation while studying because they are easily distracted by other things, and working at their own pace becomes an impediment for learners who struggle with time management and procrastination (p. 33). Furthermore, teachers' lack of expertise about how to use educational technologies is a significant barrier to implementing successful online learning. As a result, teachers must be knowledgeable enough to ensure the success of the online learning course.

Some scholars feel that, whereas traditional academic education allows conversation between the teacher and the student, interactions between face-to-face learners and their

lecturers are missing in the online learning environment. Furthermore, conventional academic communication, whether with professors or with other students on campus, and time spent in the campus library produces a distinct learning experience that contrasts with the one created at home through online learning.

Another downside of e-learning is the limiting of students' assessment, which is critical in evaluating their progress. Because of the enormous number of online courses available today, the evaluation method for students is mostly dependent on "closed" tests (multiple-choice test), homework, and the usage of various text analysis tools that examines the validity of "open" questions. However, the effectiveness of these tools is currently being debated.

Furthermore, some instructors' pedagogical perceptions of online learning have not developed. In most cases, they rely on traditional standards since these professors lack sufficient or significant expertise in the activities required for teaching-learning approaches for courses online. Additionally, as previously said, evaluation techniques are restricted, and because examinations are administered without pupils being completely observed, it is simpler for many of them to cheat.

As per Kruse (2004), a few experts believe that unsuitable e-learning content may exist and result in the acquisition of unfavourable abilities and behaviours that have complicated physical, motor, or emotional components. Furthermore, some learners have common technological challenges, such as technophobia and a lack of available technologies. He also argues that while network connection points, notebook computers, PDAs, and mobile phones are useful for e-learning, they cannot compete with printed workbooks or reference resources.

E-learning needs certain knowledge and abilities for users to effectively use multimedia, network, and web technologies, and a lack of these abilities makes users unable to benefit from the important services of e-learning. As a result, students must have access to resources like computers, the internet, and software, as well as computer skills using applications such

as word documents, web browsers, and e-mail.

Other scholars see that e-learning may adversely affect the eyesight and some other parts of the body which make the learners physically inactive in a way that sometimes they become victims of physical diseases (Collins, Buhalis, Peters, 2003).

Finally, Pongpech (2013) explains that the technological advancements in general and the communication technologies and software, in specific will minimize, if not eliminate, the majority of these disadvantages and unfavourable impacts. Furthermore, it is certain that e-learning is fast expanding as a trustworthy type of education delivery, and the different benefits and advantages of e-learning will ensure its vital part in the entire learning process.

Quality Standards for Online Courses

An important component of online education is having explicit rubrics and criteria for designing and assessing online courses. It will inform academics, designers, administrators, and students about what to expect and what to look for. Quality Matters (QM), a "continuous improvement program for assuring the design quality of online courses" (Shattuck, 2012, p. 2), is an initiative that has earned recognition as a foundational tool to promote information monitoring and analysis for online courses and has become one of the most widely used and adopted guidelines for assuring or maintaining the quality of online courses (Martin et al., 2016)

Quality Matters began in 2003, when a group of MarylandOnline scholars used an educational funding to develop a scalable process for quality assurance of online courses. They created a course design standards rubric to guide and certify the quality of online and blended courses in higher education. After the criteria were released, more than 1,300 institutions worldwide enrolled in the QM program and employed the higher education rubric for course design (QM, 2017). The number of institutions has increased over time, and the standards have been modified five times in the last five years to reflect current trends and

technologies.

The QM research-based standards are being used by a diverse range of institutions in the United States and around the world (QM, 2017). There are educational standards for kids under 12, continuing and professional education, and higher education. For the purposes of my research, I concentrated primarily on higher education levels.

The QM Higher Education Rubric (2017) has eight categories of standards including learning objectives, assessment and measurement, course activities and learner interaction, course technology, and learner support.

Conclusion

This chapter is an attempt to review the literature about online learning. Indeed, Through the improvement of the conventional teaching and learning process, online learning has become one of the most valuable and efficient tools in education. Therefore, we presented multiple definitions of online learning along with types of learning foreign languages. Moreover, the chapter presents the evolution of online learning and the learning environments. Furthermore, the chapter presents characteristics of online learning and the two types of e-learning delivery modes. Finally, the present chapter deals with types of interaction and advantages and disadvantages of the use of online learning in education with the quality standards for online courses

Chapter Two

Oral Proficiency development in

Higher Education and EFL

Context

CHAPTE 2: ORAL PROFICIENCY DEVELOPMENT IN HIGHER EDUCATION AND EFL CONTEXT

Introduction

For many nations, using ICT in the field of education has become critical and urgent. As a result, at higher education institutions, online learning is being implemented as an integral element of the students' learning experience. Furthermore, during the lockdown time of the new corona virus epidemic, online learning was the best alternative for continuing education, particularly at the tertiary level. Moreover, as a result of the fast spread of viruses, many teachers and students around the world have turned to online education to address the most important difficulties of moving from standard face-to-face learning to a virtual learning environment.

The present chapter is a review of literature that focuses on oral proficiency development at the level of higher education in general and in EFL classrooms in specific. It deals with the students' perception and attitudes towards adopting online learning in higher education, the challenges encountered within this sector. Then, it tries to shed light on the effects of e-learning on the learners' oral proficiency.

Online Learning in Higher Education

In the Information and Communications Technologies (ICT) era, teaching and learning in universities all around the world have changed dramatically. As a result, many academics believe that greater usage of information and communication technologies (ICTs) has changed the teaching-learning- learning process at all educational levels. It resulted in improving quality as the traditional approaches of teaching and learning are increasingly being adjusted to be applied in online learning environments. In this regard, online learning has become a need in most universities all across the world, particularly with the

development of its many tools “from using email to a digital portfolio and a virtual learning environment” (Boezeroorij, 2006).

E-learning has the ability to give new and alternative methods of teaching and learning, as well as boost students' ability to learn new skills (Sife, Lwoga and Sanga, 2007). As a consequence, many institutions now offer online courses or programs that utilize some type of e-learning to supplement face-to-face sessions; they also use e-learning to deliver course content in an interactive way (Fallows & Bhanot, 2005). As a result of the expanded spectrum of e-learning technologies, it is increasingly uncommon for a course or program not to be accompanied by one or more e-learning technologies.

According to Britain and Liber (2004), a considerable number of HEIs in developed nations are closely involved with the use of e-learning technology to assist their teaching and learning. They say that 97 percent of universities in the developed world use one or more kinds of Virtual Learning Environments (VLEs), while universities in undeveloped countries are progressively adopting similar e-learning technologies to get the same benefits as industrialized countries (Ssekakubo, Suleman & Marsden, 2011).

The Speaking Skill in English Foreign Language Context

EFL Skill

Students need to improve the four skills: listening, speaking, reading, and writing in order to improve their English as a foreign language. Speaking and writing, on the other hand, are productive skills, whereas listening and reading are receptive. The writing skill is the most difficult and least spontaneous, but the speaking skill can be strengthened via conversation, careful listening to native speakers, imitation, and other ways.

Definition of the Speaking Skill

Students must learn both grammar and vocabulary, which are the most crucial components of any language, in order to communicate effectively in English. Students can improve their speaking skills by using the knowledge they have learned.

The speaking skill is defined in a variety of ways. According to Chaney (1998) "Speaking is the process of building and sharing meaning through the use of verbal and non-verbal symbols in a variety of contexts" (p. 13). Similarly, Noll (2006) said that "Speaking is an interaction process which involves another person unlike listening, reading and writing" (p. 70)

Cameron (2001) defined speaking as the process of helping people comprehend the speaker's sentiments and ideas via the use of words (p.40). In other sense, individuals contribute their meanings, feelings, thoughts, and wishes when making utterances. Caroline (2005) also suggested that speaking is a basic oral communication ability among people in society (p.45)

According to the previous definitions, speaking is an activity in which the speaker creates utterances to present his or her ideas in order to exchange information with the listener so that the listener understands the meanings of the messages provided by the speaker.

Development of Speaking Proficiency

It is hardly unexpected that language learning programs have started using online courses considering how technology helps with content distribution and learning. By moving beyond the traditional brick-and-mortar setting, classroom programs and teachers have access to a new demographic of learners (Blake, 2008; Allen & Seaman, 2008). Additionally, students have access to native speakers who have received pedagogical training and who can offer carefully planned practice in the target language as well as meaningful corrective feedback that is concentrated on the kinds of errors the student are making or their areas of weakness in

specific skill like reading, writing, listening, and speaking. Students may occasionally have the chance to interact with native speakers of the target language while learning a foreign language. The problem with this style of interaction is that it is frequently discontinuous, and the native speaker is not focused on giving the learner instructional feedback that would help him fix mistakes and perform better in the target language. The interaction is primarily concerned with achieving effective communication. Learners can obtain content and skill development in the target language through specialized online language courses, which will help them come closer to their goal of achieving a higher level of language proficiency.

There is still a lack of empirical studies examining the improvements language learners achieve while using specialized online language programs. In this area, more study is required. However, in a related field, research has looked at linguistic change, more specifically fluency gains, made by students in study abroad programs where they have the chance to interact with both trained teachers and native speakers as part of their language learning practice (Baker-Smemoe, Dewey, Brown, & Martinsen, 2014; Freed, Segawlowitz, & Dewey, 2004). Study abroad programs, which could also be provided by online language classes, aim to expose students to native speakers of the target language and to give them real world practice in that language. Native English speakers who learned one of five different second languages (L2s) in various learning environments were the subject of a study by Baker-Smemoe, Dewey, Brown, and Martinsen (2014). Studying abroad was one of the contexts examined to determine if the learners' conversational fluency changed. To assess proficiency change, an oral proficiency interview (OPI) was conducted before and after the event. The students' oral proficiency increased over time, which the researchers discovered was connected with an increase in oral fluency.

Native English speakers who were studying French were the subject of a study by Freed, Segawlowitz, and Dewey in 2004. They looked carefully at the various learning

environments the students were enrolled in. A summer immersion course and a study abroad term were two of the settings. Similar to Baker-Smemoe et al. (2014) the pre-and post-interviews were conducted at the start and end of the semester instead of at the end of the course. To determine which group improved the most, fluency features were examined. The quantity of words used in a speaking sample and the rate of speech improved most for those who were participated in the summer immersion program. It surprised the researchers that the study abroad participants' fluency did not increase.

While dedicated online language courses do not provide all of the immersion benefits that study abroad courses do, one thing they do have in common is access to trained teachers and native speakers of the target language for practice and feedback. Fluency and proficiency can both be increased through various language learning situations, according to research in study abroad and immersion courses.

Oral proficiency

Growth in language acquisition is evaluated by a student's proficiency improvements, regardless of the skill. Many various elements of language usage, such as accuracy and fluency, make up proficiency. Many educational professionals see a dichotomy between accuracy and fluency (Lazaraton, 2014; Riggenbach, 2000). Accuracy is based on how language is used (Brumfit, 1984) and refers to how accurate one's speech is in terms of language use (Riggenbach, 2000). Fluency, on the other hand, is associated with active-like features of speech (Brumfit, 1984), such as the smoothness of one's speech (Riggenbach, 2000).

Fluency and its features

While many researches have been conducted on oral fluency, no unified definition for the word has been developed. Fluency, according to Riggenbach (2000), is the "smoothness" of one's speech, especially in continuous discourse. This definition applies to both native and

non-native English speakers, while Bailey and Nunan (2005) and Blake (2008) provide a non-native speaker definition. Fluency, they argue, is the capacity to talk within native speech standards.

While there is no universal definition of fluency, experts have agreed on several characteristics. Bohlke (2014) said that reviewing the linguistic usage of suprasegmentals or prosodic feature, like rate of speech, pauses, and connecting of thought groups, might reveal native norms of speech.

Challenges in Learning Speaking Online

Despite the versatility of online learning, both teachers and students may find it to be a real challenge. According to Miyamoto et al. (2017) :

One significant challenge is that online courses require students to have self-discipline, good time management skills, and self-study habits, among other things, however not all students have these qualities, and the trouble is that they may or may not know they have these qualities until they start (p. 7).

Also, according to Miyamoto et al. (2017) “another challenge is that many students tend to do all their self-study assignments at the last minute, right before real time session and this cramming method is not beneficial to them” (p. 7)

Another difficulty in learning speaking online is professors' and students' unfamiliarity with the technology utilized in online courses, which is the most frequent barrier for online speakers. Moreover, there are insufficient chances for practicing speaking, which has a significant impact on learners' oral proficiency. There is also a lack of communication between students and between the teachers and students, as well as the inability to provide immediate feedback, as it is common in face-to-face classroom education.

The Effects of Online learning on Learner's Oral Proficiency

When schools and colleges were forced to close as a result of the Covid-19 epidemic, online teaching became the most popular method of instruction. According to Bates (2005), online learning includes the use of the internet and the World Wide Web (p.8). Due to constant exposure to English content, this innovative method of education, known as "Online Learning," allows students to improve their fluency of the language.

In fact, learners are more interested when they learn online. Numerous learners in traditional classroom courses do not connect with their lessons or teachers, and they suffer as a result of their attendance. For this reason, we can say that online courses are better than traditional classroom courses because it uses both asynchronous and synchronous learning. Holcomb et al. (2004) assert that asynchronous learning occurs when the teacher and learners are distanced from both time and place (p. 2). In other words, asynchronous learning refers to students' capacity to access knowledge, demonstrate what they've learned, and engage with teachers and peers on their own time, without having to be in the same room or even at the same timing. Asynchronous learning is also known as location-dependent learning because learners can get access to the course from anywhere in the globe due to the worldwide web.

According to Holcomb et al. (2004), synchronous learning occurs when the teacher and learners work at the same time but are physically separated (p. 2). In other words, synchronous learning necessitates real connection via online or web conferencing, or by going to class, and it is typically less flexible and disturbing to students' lives. It also makes it easier for teachers and students to engage in group work.

Learners in virtual classes have additional opportunities and options for how they wish to study their lessons, such as through games, recorded courses, video conferencing, or PowerPoint with voice-over. Furthermore, many students in traditional classrooms are

introverts who do not engage even if they have the answer. As a result, online courses may address this issue and help learners feel more relaxed while speaking and debating, and collaborating.

Overall, we can conclude that the existence of advanced applications such as WhatsApp, Google Meet, Google Classroom, Zoom, Skype, and other applications that allow learners to interact with their classmates and teachers, as well as native speakers, has made it possible for them to be more dynamic and more interactive.

The Role of the Instructor in Online Learning

In contrast to traditional face-to-face teaching, teachers are not visible in online environments. Researchers have linked the concept of visibility to the concept of social presence (Fabro & Garrison, 1998; Garrison, & Archer, 1999; McIsaac & Gunawardena, 1996; Rourke, Anderson, Garrison, & Archer, 1999; Savery, 2010).

Teaching presence is described in online learning by Garrison et al. (2010) as "the design, facilitation, and direction of cognitive and social processes for the purpose of realizing personally meaningful and educationally worthwhile learning outcomes" (p. 32). Since the teacher is not present in online learning, students may become frustrated. Teachers must use ways to maintain excellent communication and visibility inside the online course to avoid students getting unsatisfied (Murphy, 2015).

The instructor's position is changing since control is being replaced by influence, according to Panckhurst and Marsh (2011). Teachers no longer have power over a classroom; instead, they now influence over a network. Although Hampel and Stickler (2015) claim that online language instruction is a social constructivist attempt, but despite being aware of this theoretical trend, many instructors continue to use technology to adopt new tools to their old teaching style. Instead, they should be learning new skills that will allow them to employ pedagogically transformative practice to strengthen both online teachers and online students.

They go on to say that this could have happened because prior literature on educating teachers to be online instructors had a strong focus on the technological components of the role. More recent approaches, on the other hand, use the Community of Inquiry (CoI) framework to build online teaching and learning (Garrison, Anderson, & Archer, 2010; Murphy, 2015). Within the online context, this framework indicates three crucial components for teachers: social presence, cognitive presence, and teaching presence.

EFL Learners and Online Course Difficulties

One of the primary challenges that EFL learners encounter in an online course is a lack of technological understanding; many students do not have Smartphones or computers, and therefore they have no experience with internet platforms and applications such as Zoom, Telegram, and others. According to Leli Efriana (2021) (p3), "The problem is that some students' parents and students do not have computer or android device, such condition makes them difficult in facing the reality". On the one hand, there is a need to provide educational services to pupils, as required by the constitution. They, on the other hand, experience a shortage of support facilities as Iskandar and Wahab (2020) said.

According to Leli Efriana (2021), the problem "does not end with a lack of technological equipment." Even if they have access to the internet, students have trouble accessing the network due to where they live (p3). "A research conducted by Nashruddin, Alam, and Tanasy (2020) reveals that some students reside in remote rural locations that are not covered by the internet," according to Leli Efriana (2021). Furthermore, their cellular network is occasionally inconsistent owing to their geographical position, which is fairly far from signal coverage. This is also a challenge that many students have while using online learning, making implementation less successful".

Furthermore, a lack of spontaneous communication leads to a loss of motivation, as proved by Pamela (S. Bacon David Bagwell Jr, 2005): "Successful online learning demands

more autonomous learning and higher levels of self-motivation than a normal classroom. There is no teacher telling you what to do each day!" (p31).

According to Afaneh, M., et Al "Students in the online course may feel isolated from the instructor. "Students in the online course may feel disconnected from the teacher, Because instructions are not always accessible to aid the learner, students must develop the discipline to work independently without the instructor's support. E-learners must also have strong writing and communication abilities. When teachers and other learners do not meet face to face, it is potential for misinterpretation to occur" (2006, p.24). Furthermore, they argued that E-learning takes the same amount of time to attend class and complete homework as any traditional classroom course. This means that pupils must be extremely motivated and responsible because they are accountable for all of their own work. Learners with low motivation or poor study habits may fall behind without the usual frameworks of a typical class; students may become disoriented or confused about course activities and deadlines, causing them to fail or perform badly.

Conclusion

To conclude, this chapter deals with the online learning in higher education and the concept of oral proficiency development in EFL context. Indeed, by strengthening the traditional teaching and learning process, e-learning has become one of the most important and efficient methods in education. This chapter shed light into some definitions, concepts correlated to speaking skill and oral proficiency, presenting its features, and challenges of learning online. Moreover, it also deals with the effects of online learning on the learner's oral proficiency and the role of the instructor in controlling the learning process and making the virtual learning more interesting.

Chapter Three

Field Work and Data

Analysis

CHAPTER 3: FIELD WORK AND DATA ANALYSIS

Introduction

The current study investigates the impact of online English language courses on EFL learners' oral proficiency. The study, indeed, focuses on investigating the challenges encountered by EFL students at Mohamed Kheider University with online learning, and the influence of this approach on their fluency development. This practical part consists of a presentation and description of the tools used, data collection as well as analysis and interpretation of the results obtained.

Based on the previous chapters, that presented relevant literature reviews about online learning, this chapter aims at providing an answer to our research questions and hypothesis. It identifies the setting in which the study was conducted and the methodological approach used in conducting this research. Hence, we divided it into three sections. The first section represents a detailed description of our study. The second one deals with data interpretation and findings. The third section is devoted to the discussion of the findings.

Section One: Description of the Study

This section provides a review of the research methodology, including details on our research method, population and sample, data gathering tools, and data analysis procedure.

Research Method

A descriptive qualitative approach was seen as an appropriate way for uncovering EFL learners' obstacles, insights, and demands in response to moving to online learning since the Covid-19 epidemic. The qualitative method was chosen for this research project because it allows for a large amount of comprehensive and valuable information on people's views, thoughts, and experiences about certain subjects or life circumstances. Furthermore, without limiting the scope of the research or the type of the participant's responses, this research

approach provides a detailed description and analysis of a study subject (Collis & Hussey, 2013). Merriam (1995) made a similar point, claiming that qualitative research is good for elucidating and comprehending phenomena and situations.

Population and Sample

The population of our study is third year students of English as a foreign language at Mohamed Kheider University of Biskra, Algeria. The whole population of third students is one hundred seventy-two (272) students. However, the number of students who have volunteered are forty (40) students.

Random sampling is used to pick our sample. Random sampling has long been seen to prevent bias in the selection process. Random selection, according to Kumar Singh (2006) is an objective form of sampling that ensures accuracy in the analysis of the data. Similarly, Marczyk, DeMatteo, and Festinger (2005) state that it aids in the control of external variables that may impact the results as well as increase the external validity of the study.

Data Collection Tools

The research tool used to conduct this study and collect data is a questionnaire. The questionnaire was elaborated during the academic year 2021/2022 to collect data from EFL third year students of the University of Biskra in order to gather learners' opinion about online learning and add a new insight from their experience in developing their oral proficiency.

The choice of the questionnaire was due to the nature of our research. Whereas, the main objective is to gather information about students' ideas, attitudes, and experiences about the topic under research. The questionnaire was done and submitted via the internet.

Data analysis procedure

The data acquired from the students' questionnaire is described and interpreted using a descriptive analysis procedure.

The purpose of the questionnaire is to gather various students' perspectives, perceptions, challenges, and barriers regarding their online learning experience in developing their oral proficiency. We also asked to hear their ideas for dealing with, overcoming, and reducing these problems.

Description of the Students' Questionnaire

The questionnaire consists of 15 questions which fall into two types: close-ended, open-ended. In so far as close-ended questions are concerned, students are asked to tick the appropriate answers that mostly appeal to them. Through two open-ended questions, students are asked to provide free responses. However, students are asked to provide justification for their choice through two close-ended questions.

The questions are logically ordered, classified under two sections. The first section which consists of three (3) general questions was designed to gather background information about the respondents. It is devoted to getting insights into students' oral proficiency level at English language and their use of internet in learning.

The second section includes twelve (12) questions addressed to the students in order to explore their experience, attitudes, and choices in relation to the impact of online learning on their oral proficiency. It is intended to investigate the challenges learners have confronted in relationship to online learning courses and the impact of this type of learning on their fluency development. Also, they had to generate their opinions and judgements; and individualize their problems and suggestions with regard to online learning courses personal experience.

Section Two: Data Interpretation and Findings

Students' Questionnaire

Section 1: Background Information

Question 1. Students' Gender

Table 1. Participants genders

Gender	Number of students	Percentage
Male	6	15%
Female	34	85%
Total	40	100%

The results in Table 1 indicate that 34 (85%) of the participants are females; whereas, only 6 (15%) of them are males.

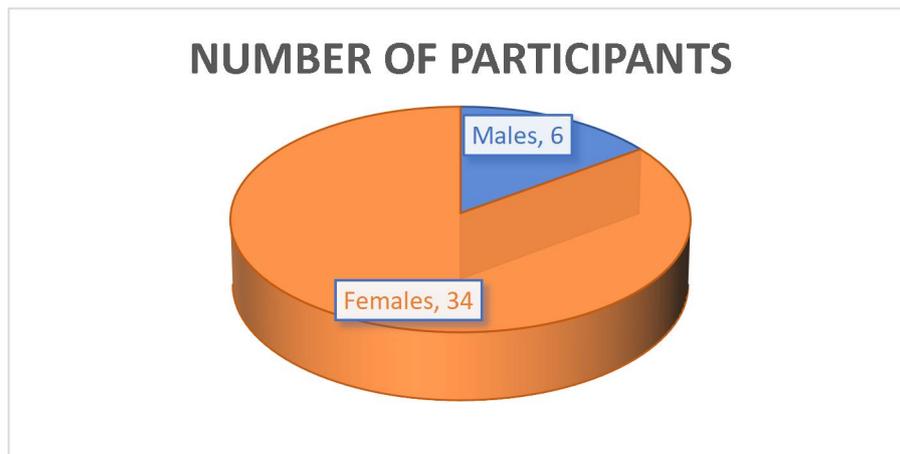


Figure 1. Participants genders.

Question 2. Do you use the internet for your English courses?

Table 2. Participants' use of internet for English courses

Option	Number of students	percentage
Yes	37	92.5%
No	3	7.5%
Total	40	100%

This question aimed to find out whether students use the Internet to support learning or not.

In response to this question (92.5 %) of the students stated that they use the Internet for their English courses, the other (7.5 %) stated that they do not use the Internet for their English courses.

Question 3. How would you rate your oral proficiency?

Table 3. Participants' oral proficiency level

Level	Number of students	percentage
Very good	6	15%
Good	23	57.5%
Average	11	27.5%
Poor	0	0%
Total	40	100%

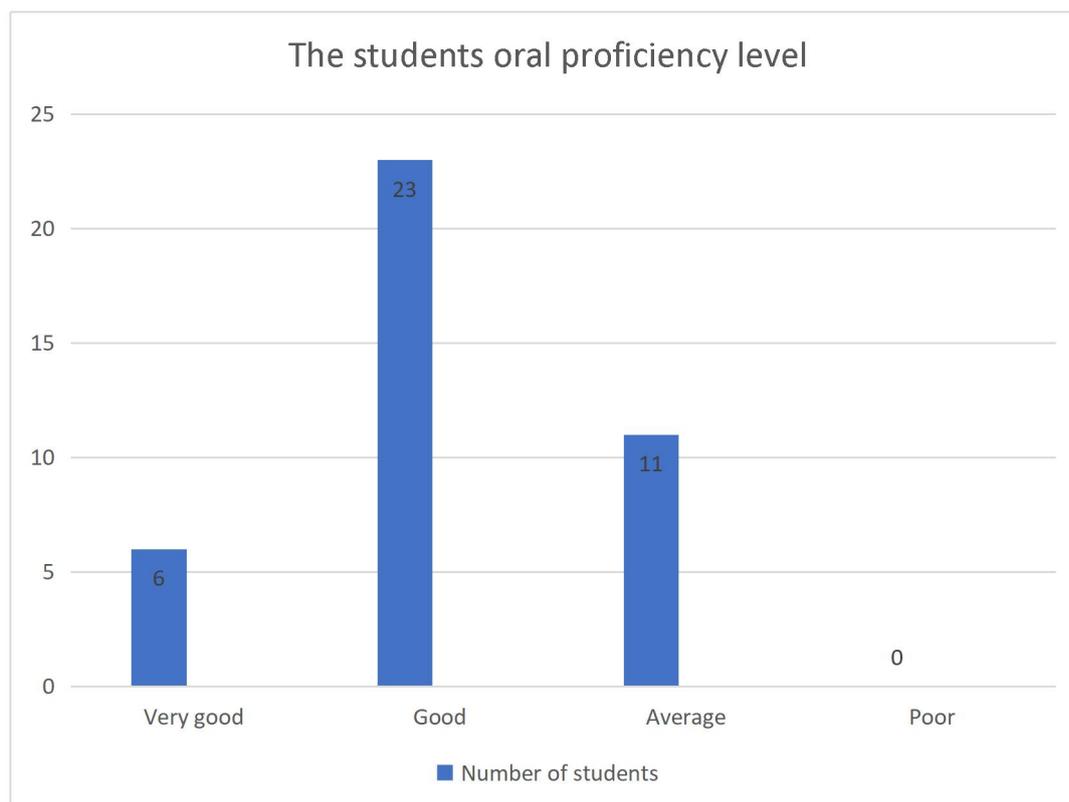


Figure 2. Participants' oral proficiency level.

This question is targeted to get insights about students' oral proficiency level in English. As displayed in table, more than a half number of the participants (57.5 %) reported that they have a good level at oral proficiency. (15 %) considered their level as very good. Yet, (11 %) of participants reported that their level is average.

Section 2: Students' views concerning the impact of online learning courses on their oral proficiency

Question 1. How important is oral proficiency for you?

Table 4. The importance of oral proficiency to participants

Option	Number of students	Percentage
Highly important	30	75%
Important	9	22.5%
As little important	1	2.5%
Not important	0	0%
Total	40	100%

Question 2. Have you been taking online courses before?

Table 5. Number of participants who took online courses

Option	Number of students	Percentage
Yes	24	60%
No	16	40%
Total	40	100%

Question 3. How would you rate online courses?

Table 6. Online courses rating among participants

Options	Number of students	Percentage
good	6	15%
Very good	23	57.5%
average	11	27.5%
poor	0	0%
Total	40	100%

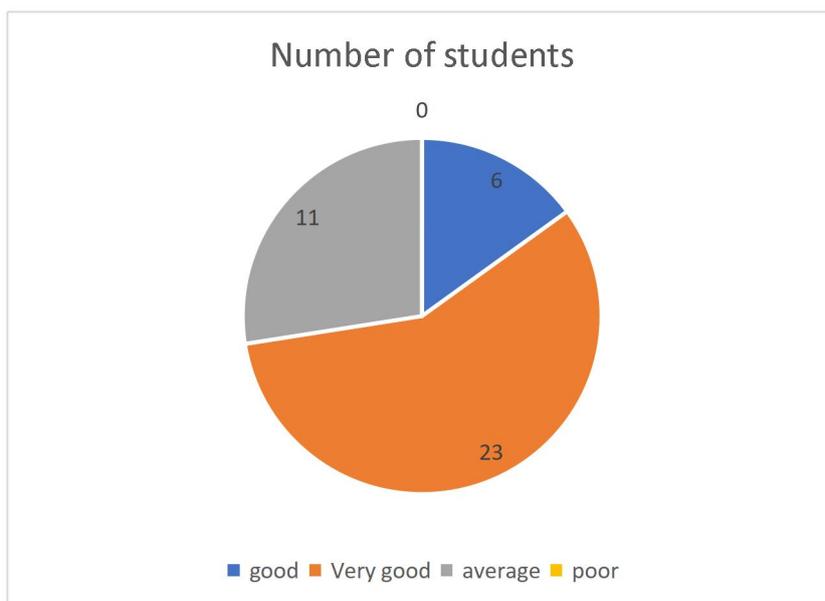


Figure 3. Online courses rating among participants.

Question 4. Would you consider online courses as an effective tool for improving your capacities in mastering English oral proficiency?

Table 7. participants opinion about the effectiveness of online courses in improving their oral proficiency capacities.

Option	Number of students	Percentage
Yes	29	72.5%
No	11	27.5%
Total	40	100%

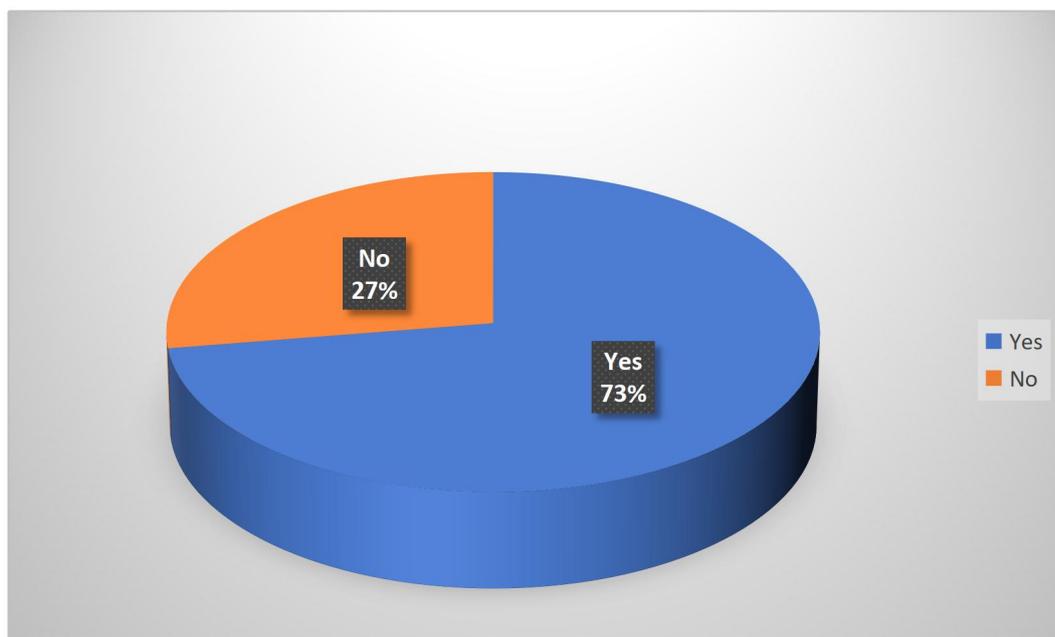


Figure 4. participants opinion about the effectiveness of online courses in improving their oral proficiency capacities.

Question 5. Students explanation about considering online courses whether as an effective tool or not for improving their capacities in mastering English oral proficiency.

Question (5) is the second part of the previous question (4). Students were asked to explain according to their previous answers why online courses is an effective tool to improve their capacities in mastering English oral proficiency or why not to those who

answered with no.

Participants who selected 'Yes' gave the following justifications:

- Getting knowledge about some aspects of language (vocabulary, accent, spelling...) will reinforce the oral proficiency
- Because it is advanced and helped me
- The more we practice the more we master faster the language
- Good online courses provide us the entertainment which the traditional courses lack, despite the fact that listening is the most important guide to mastering speaking skills.. as it also reinforces the group work skills
- Because it is a modern method and helps the learner to learn more without getting bored
- Helps me enhance my speaking fluency
- Because maybe the student can participate in an online oral conversation with confidence whatever the topic is
- Because with online courses will be more comfortable in your home to speak
- If those courses are prepared the way they must be with an excellent teacher of course things will go well
- An online course is a new tool that depends on technology to acquire language the same as reading listening .. and so one although I've never tried it before but I believe that it is effective.
- Because it gives the students a chance to talk and interact with other people which helps them to talk more and use English more.
- To improve your oral skills, you have to use anything as a helpful tool and online courses can be a large stage to share your ideas with less fear
- Because it provides a different kind of oral interaction that students might find more helpful than actual courses

- It is the same thing as normal courses and much better because you feel more comfortable, you will find time to think about what to say before. For me, it is a good tool

Participants who selected 'No' gave the following justifications:

- Online courses don't have many benefits in oral or any skills I think that practising the language in our daily life is better.
- I believe that online courses not related to the oral proficiency
- To improve speaking proficiency, one must interact with people and this option is not available in online courses.
- It's not in my interest to master pronunciation through online courses.
- I do not like online courses
- The attendance sessions are more important than the online courses
- Not effective

Question 6. What do you think are the benefits of using online courses for students to develop their oral proficiency?

- Get much information and time to analyse them and have the chance to elaborate all that we have found
- The absolute benefits of online courses are more artificial and fit any learner's style whether audio, visual, kinaesthetic, etc...
- To be confident. Attendance is not obligatory. Make mistakes and correct each other without feeling shy
- Somehow they have to practice either in a traditional way (college courses) or in online courses, it quite good for the student who seems to be shy, they might interact much better in online courses rather than the traditional one
- Gaining new vocabulary and developing their sociolinguistic knowledge can improve

their oral proficiency

- Enhance self-esteem Kill the feeling of being shy when they attempt to perform something Get used to speaking in another language Help to collaborate
- Enhance self-esteem. Kill the feeling of being shy when they attempt to perform something. Get used to speaking in another language. Help to collaborate
- First of all, it helps students to be more open to other people and not be shy; second of all it helps them to talk more and more and be aware of their mistakes and learn from others
- For students who deal with social anxiety i think it's way more comfortable for them to keep up with their courses online

Question 7. Does online learning promotes learners' interaction and collaboration

Table 8. Students' opinion about online learning as it promotes learners' interaction and collaboration

Options	Number of students	Percentage
Strongly agree	9	22.5%
Agree	17	42.5%
Neutral	13	32.5%
Disagree	0	0%
Strongly disagree	1	2.5%
Total	40	100%

The mean scores of responses to question 7 which aimed to know if online learning promotes learners' interaction and collaboration showed that (22.5%) of participants strongly agreed, and (42.5%) of participants agreed. A lower percentage of (32.5%) were neutral. While those who strongly disagree scored the lowest percentage (2.5%). Probably, these results are good indicators of key information about how could online courses help in the collaboration and

interaction.

Question 8. What kind of interaction does your teacher create in an online speaking course

Table 9. The kind of Interaction the Teacher use in an online course.

Options	Numbers	Percentage
Learner with learner	13	32.5%
Learner with instructor	15	37.5%
Learner with content	24	60%
Total	52	100%

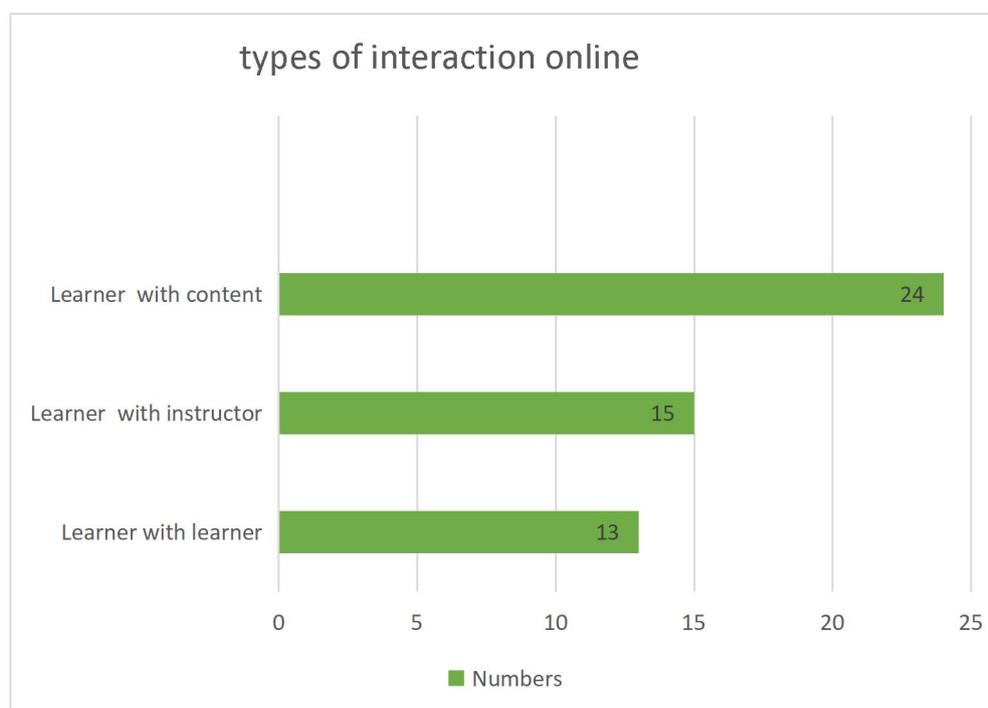


Figure 5. The kind of Interaction the Teacher use in an online course.

The question at hand aims at identifying the type of interaction that the teacher uses according to the students in an online course to enhance speaking proficiency. From the table and the chart above, we notice that more than half of the sample with a percentage of (60%) responded with “learner with content”, whereas, (37.5%) chose “learner with instructor”.

Finally, a less portion of **(32.5%)** selected “learner with learner”.

Question 9. Which type do you prefer? And why

The participants who preferred the ‘**Learner with learner**’ gave the following explanation:

- A learner with the learner, just so I can be informed about other's opinions and also will not feel bored or disconnected.
- I think when students study with one another it is workable due to I noticed that the information we get from each other we never forget when we compare with teacher's way of teaching and so on.
- Because as learners we understand each other better.
- Personally, I prefer the learners' interaction with one another because it enables the learner to understand the meaning from different perspectives.

The participants who preferred the ‘**Learner with instructor**’ gave this explanation:

- The second one because the teacher was like a guide for us
- I prefer learner with the instructor because the instructor helps the learner and is considered as a guide for him and corrects his mistakes
- A learner with instructor due to the fact that it enables students to gain information from somebody with a higher level of oral competence
- the learner with the instructor; because the teacher is the one with better knowledge than the others.

The participants who preferred the ‘**Learner with content**’ gave this explanation:

- A learner with content. Because somehow I am an Introvert and that is better than a learner with a learner
- A learner with content. Because somehow, I am an Introvert and that is better than a learner with a learner
- Learner with content. Because we always need a guide to know the right sources and

information.

- Learner with content. If the content of the course is well-organized and it is informing enough, there will be no need for the interaction between the students and the learners.

Question 10. Select the challenges that you are usually faced within learning to speak online.

The aim of the question is to find out the challenges that students encounter in learning and developing oral proficiency online. The results point out that **(62.5%)** of the respondents chose “poor network connection” as the most challenging aspect in online courses. And “time management” was selected by **(42.5%)** of the learners. Moreover, **(30%)** opted for “the limited interaction between students and between students and the teacher”. Finally, **(17.5%)** of the sample chose “The unfamiliarity with technologies used in an online course”.

Question 11. Based on your previous experience, please answer the question below:

I feel that my English oral skills has improved since taking online courses.

Table 10. participants attitudes towards improving oral skills through online courses.

Choice	Number of students	percentage
Strongly agree	3	7.5%
Agree	14	35%
Neutral	17	42.5%
Disagree	6	15%
Strongly disagree	0	0%
Total	40	100%

The respondents were asked to indicate the extent to which they agree or disagree with online learning courses being effective to oral proficiency skills. The answers on this question are generated in the Table . The results report that **(7.5%)** of the learners ‘strongly

agree' on the statement. While (35%) responded with 'agree'. However, (42.5%) of the students remain 'neutral'. Also, (15%) were disagreeing with this statement.

Question 12. What can be more effective to improve oral proficiency through online courses?

- Oral proficiency does not need courses that are included in the curriculum, but it needs practice and interaction with others especially native speakers, for instance, online communication through video/voice calls.
- Free conversation and discussion.
- Deal with conversations with others and with native speakers to improve this skill
- Speaking about the Algerian case, a strong internet connection would be great as well as interaction with teachers and students. Making it an enjoyable approach.
- Give everyone the chance to talk. Change opinions. Use new materials more effective to create a fluent student with such competency.
- Stay motivated; keep your attention on others while they are speaking, and don't just listen and talk with them; take notes so you can be aware of the mistakes you've done.

The Interpretation of Students' Questionnaire Results

The students' questionnaire was carried out for the sake of gathering information concerning EFL learners' attitudes towards online learning courses to develop the speaking proficiency. The analysis of the students' questionnaire shows that the majority of third year EFL learners at the department of English at Mohamed Kidher-Biskra consider online courses as an effective and enjoyable tool for improving their capacities in mastering English oral skills, while a small portion see it as not effective. Furthermore, third year EFL learners who chose the effectiveness of the online courses expressed that it provides a different kind of oral interaction which learners find it more helpful than traditional courses

methods, while the learners explained why it is not effective by admitting that they prefer the traditional classroom method which they found it more workable. On the One hand, according to the findings, the vast majority of third-year EFL students chose learner with content interaction as the most frequently generated type of interaction by the teacher. Students, on the other hand, prefer more learner with instructor interactions, which they justify by the need for the teacher's assistance and supervision to explain misunderstandings. Furthermore, students who choose learner with learner interaction defended their choice by claiming that it helps in the development of their oral abilities. Additionally, it allows them to avoid awkward scenarios with the teacher, indicating that more introverted students prefer this type of interaction. Students who choose learner with content interaction defended their choice by stating that they needed additional information about the lesson for a better understanding of the lectures.

According to the results, most third year EFL learners consider online learning effective in developing their speaking proficiency as it gives them more freedom of self-expression, whilst others believe that it helps them to develop their speaking skills in an individualized environment at their own pace. Finally, the results demonstrated that a small portion considers online learning courses effective because it provides them with the opportunity to interact with proficient speakers, consequently third year EFL learners have positive attitudes toward online learning. It was found that some difficulties related to learning online led some students to develop negative attitudes towards online learning courses. The difficulties include limited interaction with the teacher and with colleagues, and demotivating issues due to poor network connection; ultimately outcomes indicated that a small portion had issues with the unfamiliarity of the online learning technologies.

According to the results of the questionnaire analysis, most third-year EFL learners

face difficulties learning speaking skills online due to time management issues, while other challenges include unfamiliarity with online learning technologies, a lack of time to practice speaking, and finally limited interaction with the teacher.

To summarize, the findings show that the majority of third-year students at Mohamed Khider's English department in Biskra have positive attitudes toward online learning courses for enhancing their oral proficiency, and the majority of them agree on its effectiveness in learning speaking while admitting that it poses some challenges.

Conclusion

This chapter represents the practical part of this study, it consists of the presentation of the sample and the research tools which is a questionnaire administered to forty third year students at the department of English at the University of Mohamed Khider. It also contains the data analysis and the findings of this research which highlight the fact that the majority of EFL learners are familiar with the online learning courses. Finally, the results of this study illustrated that EFL learners have positive attitudes towards online learning courses to develop their speaking proficiency, on the other hand, the learners still have some difficulties when learning online.

General conclusion

The current study investigated EFL learners attitudes towards online learning courses and its impact on their oral proficiency. It aimed to shed light on the effectiveness of the online learning approach, in addition to the advantages and the disadvantages of this method. To achieve the objectives of this study, a questionnaire was administered to third year EFL learners at the department of English at Mohamed Khider, Biskra.

The research work at hand is made up of three chapters: a theoretical part which is divided into two chapters. The first chapter is devoted to an overview of online learning, presenting its history, characteristics of learning online, in addition to introducing modes of delivery, types of interaction, and ultimately advantages and disadvantages of this method. The second chapter is dedicated to a brief overview of the EFL skills in higher education. It discusses the definitions of the speaking skill and oral proficiency provided by different scholars. Moreover, it sheds light on fluency and its features. Eventually, it outlines the challenges in learning speaking online and the effects of online learning on learner's oral proficiency in addition to the role of the teacher in an online context. Furthermore, the third chapter is the practical part of the study. It includes a summary of the students' questionnaire, data analysis, and interpretation of the results, as well as limits and some pedagogical recommendations.

The findings of the present study showed that the majority of the third year EFL learners at the English department at Mohamed Khider-Biskra experienced the online learning method. The results demonstrated that most of the EFL learners have a good level of oral proficiency. In addition, it is found that EFL learners have positive attitudes towards conducting an online speaking course. Furthermore, the findings showed that the majority of third year EFL students believe this strategy is a significant tool for enhancing

their skills in studying English oral proficiency since it allows them to express themselves freely and work at their own pace which introverted learners highly appreciated. However, they acknowledged that students face significant difficulties, including time management, unfamiliarity with online learning technology, poor network connection, and limited interaction with the teacher. It was revealed that most of them opt for a promotion in learners' interaction and collaboration through online courses. Moreover, the majority of the learners asserted that they prefer the learner with instructor interaction. On the other hand, the overwhelming majority of EFL learners have positive attitudes toward online learning courses for enhancing their oral proficiency, and the majority of them agree on its effectiveness in learning speaking while admitting that it poses some challenges.

Pedagogical Recommendations

Additional recommendations and ideas are highlighted for future investigations in light of the findings of the current study:

- Through the process of learning online, teachers should assist their students.
- The learning environment should be developed in a way that facilitates and motivate students to develop their speaking skills.

- To enhance their online learning environment, students should participate in a variety of practice sessions.
- Students should take a more active role in and be responsible for their education online.

- In an online learning environment, peer guidance, peer feedback, and group learning should be promoted.
- Learners should participate in events hosted by native speakers and language experts online.

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Appendix

Students' questionnaire

Dear students,

We would be very grateful if you could devote some of your time to answer the following questions meant for an academic research on the impact of online courses on EFL

Learners' oral proficiency. Your answers will be confidently treated.

May we thank you in advance for your cooperation and for the time devoted to answer the questionnaire.

*Required

1. Please indicate your gender *

Mark only one oval.

a) Male

b) female

2. Do you use the internet for your English courses? *

Mark only one oval.

Yes

No

3. How would you rate your oral proficiency? *

Mark only one oval.

- Very good
- Good
- Average
- poor

Students' Views Concerning the impact of Online Learning on their Oral proficiency

4. How important is oral proficiency for you? *

Mark only one oval.

- Highly important
- Important
- as little importance
- Not important

5. Have you been taking online courses before? *

Mark only one oval.

- Yes
- No

6. If yes, how would you rate these courses?

Mark only one oval.

- a) Extremely unenjoyable
- b) Very unenjoyable
- c) Somewhat enjoyable
- d) Very enjoyable
- e) Extremely enjoyable

7. Would you consider online courses as an effective tool for improving your capacities in mastering English oral proficiency? *

Mark only one oval.

- Yes
- No

9. What do you think are the benefits of using online courses for students to develop their oral proficiency? *

14. Based on your previous experience, please answer the question below *
I feel that my English oral skills has improved since taking online courses.

Mark only one oval.

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

15. What can be more effective to improve oral proficiency through online courses? *

Résumé

La présente étude a examiné les attitudes des apprenants d'EFL à l'égard de l'apprentissage en ligne pour améliorer leurs compétences orales. Il visait à mettre en lumière l'efficacité du mode en ligne dans le développement des compétences orales et les attitudes du apprenants à l'égard de cette approche. Afin d'atteindre les objectifs de cette étude, une approche qualitative a été choisie pour recueillir et analyser les données. Un questionnaire a été administré aux apprenants de troisième année de l'EFL au département d'anglais de l'Université Mohamed Kheider de Biskra. À la lumière des résultats obtenus, les étudiants ont des attitudes positives envers l'apprentissage en ligne dans le développement de leurs compétences orales, ils le jugent efficace parce qu'il les aide à s'exprimer et à interagir plus librement de manière facile et à développer leurs compétences orales dans un environnement individualisé à leur propre rythme et à leur propre temps. En tant qu'apprenants d'EFL, ils rencontrent des difficultés dans l'utilisation de cette nouvelle méthode comme la gestion du temps, la méconnaissance des technologies d'apprentissage en ligne, une mauvaise connexion au réseau, en plus d'une interaction limitée entre les étudiants et leurs enseignants.

Mots clés : Apprentissage en ligne, Compétence orale, Étudiants anglais.

الملخص

يهدف هذا البحث الى دراسة موقف طلبة اللغة الانجليزية كلغة أجنبية تجاه الدراسة عبر الأنترنت من أجل تحسين و تعزيز كفاءتهم الشفهية. و هدفت الدراسة الى إلقاء الضوء على فاعلية الدراسة عبر النت في تطوير المهارات الشفوية و كذلك موقف الطلبة تجاه هذا النهج. و لتحقيق أهداف هذا البحث تم اختيار اسلوب نوعي لجمع البيانات و تحليلها حيث قمنا بإجراء استبيان لمتدربي اللغة الانجليزية في السنة الثالثة ليسانس بقسم اللغة الانجليزية بجامعة محمد خيذر بسكرة. أين أظهرت النتائج المحصل عليها ردود فعل ايجابية من الطلبة تجاه التعلم عبر الأنترنت لأجل تطوير مهارات التحدث لديهم وقد اعتبرها معظم الطلبة فعالة لأنها تساعدهم في التفاعل و التعبير بحرية و بسهولة، و انماء مهاراتهم الشفوية في بيئة فردية في أي وقت و كما يحلو لهم. و بصفتهم طلبة للغة الانجليزية كلغة أجنبية واجهوا مجموعة من العقبات في اسخدام أسلوب التعلم عبر الأنترنت منها مشكل ادارة الوقت و صعوبة التأقلم مع تقنيات التعلم عبر النت و سوء الإتصال بالشبكة، بالإضافة إلى التفاعل المحدود بين الطلبة و أساتذتهم.

الكلمات المفتاحية: التعلم عبر الأنترنت، الكفاءة الشفوية، طلاب اللغة الانجليزية.