English Language Teachers' Perspectives on Utilizing Online Courses in Public Schools in Jordan

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Abstract

Teachers' interactions with students have changed due to the advantages of online classes in schools. This study is executed to determine the impact of COVID-19 pandemic on the adoption of online courses as a crucial alternative to traditional learning. This study uses a quantitative approach, the method used is a questionnaire. 100 English language teachers participated to predict their points of view related to teaching EFL in an online setting. The results indicate that most of the teachers showed negative attitudes and appeared unprepared and unenthusiastic to teaching in such an environment. Second, teachers seemed to be unqualified in terms of having solid technical knowledge in computers, software, and the internet. Third, teachers reflected that they face difficulties which hinder their acceptance to applying for online courses. The study concluded with the recommendation that large-scale research needs done to have a thorough grasp of the current issue.

Keywords: COVID-19 pandemic, online courses, teachers' perspective, e-learning, English language teachers, EFL, Public Schools in Jordan.

1. Introduction

Adopting online courses began in higher education, especially at universities and colleges. Online learning was adopted in a few schools and mainly focused on postsecondary education within the past decade. Online academic sessions forced teachers and students to work hard to absorb and understand it. However, the result appeared discouraging and somehow disappointing. According to Othman, et al online learning is employed in the higher education model (i.e., university) to: (1) raise university exposure, (2) expand educational suggestions, and (3) study "virtualization" (Othman et al., 2018:55).

According to (Oye et al., 2003), e-learning comprises many computer-assisted learning methods, many of which employ several technologies, including (i) digital library tools, (ii) knowledge representation tools, and (iii) curriculum tools. Furthermore, several software tools

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such as Google Meet and Zoom have been widely used to conduct lectures and academic sessions for students. These software tools are considerably helpful and beneficial for both teachers and students and enable achieving the teaching goals during outbreaks (Pratama et al., 2020).

Through e-learning, students could learn whenever and wherever they wanted without physically contacting an instructor or lecturer (Heeger, 2010: 8). Likewise, it allowed graduate/postgraduate students to take similar plans simultaneously. Consequently, online courses can improve the efficiency of students' learning (Heeger, 2010: 12). In essence, these courses have evolved into a professionally developed method and technique for shaping the teaching, training, and development of teaching processes.

To achieve educational objectives, academic and training institutions collaborated to make significant advances in the use of more interactive online strategies that foster and improve the overall performance of students and their educators. Therefore, developed countries recognized the need of having academic institutions which employ interactive online courses (Soleymanpour et al., 2010).

The advantage of the huge advances in technology and the pedagogical shift in education worldwide have allowed providing online courses to become the norm. Teachers and students agree that such a shift catalyzes the whole learning process because it focuses on collaboration, interaction, and autonomous learning. As such, this interactive and collaborative approach enabled students and instructors to co-create a productive learning process. It is a method of self-improvement and active learning (Obringer, 2002). This aspect is a natural revolutionary strategy. It has come to counter the dominant traditional pedagogical approaches and trends. Formal training and learning approaches are challenged by e-learning, which offers innovative answers to difficulties. (Haverila & Barkhi, 2009). In the past, the learning process was mainly revolving around the teacher, whereas this online approach is student-centered. Instead of just passively absorbing information, students have become empowered, autonomous, and active learners.

Online techniques highlight the value of an interactive learning environment that encourages discussion among participants in the learning process, such as students and their teachers. It became imperative that both instructor and students adopt active roles. The role of the instructor narrowed down in that he became a facilitator who monitors and organizes the learning process. For example, teachers may shift from the importer of knowledge to the disseminator of knowledge. The teacher has become a facilitator who monitors and organizes the learning process (Haverila & Barkhi, 2009).

The reasons for choosing to attend online courses vary depending on the circumstances and the needs of the learners. For instance, the required courses are not available at the selected institution or living in remote locations. As a result, online classes offer a great alternative for

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students who don't want to be limited by time or place. This aspect allows them to have permanent and unlimited access to instruction anytime from anywhere. Other learners work full-time, and these online courses provide them with crucial solutions to their busy lives. Finally, online classes work better for inhibited students who normally prefer to learn independently.

Traditional education appeared unfit and impractical. Therefore, online courses become a crucial and viable alternative in the face of such a challenge. Online courses are broadcast on national stations for all students. Private and public schools alike started to launch educational platforms where teachers endeavor to provide online classes and tests.

For a long time, the traditional teaching system has been a classroom, where teachers give lectures to students who listen and take notes. Because of the new implementation of online classes, it is necessary to investigate the success and practicality of this approach. A significant learning component in education has been highlighted as communication between teachers and students. Therefore, teachers' perspectives regarding online courses are considered a cornerstone in searching for a better understanding of this phenomenon.

Throughout a long career in education and association with students, it is found that the perspectives and appropriate use of educational developments do not necessarily lead to positive results. It is critical to perform prior studies to determine the attitudes of the target group and the trends and the capabilities to absorb the developments. When reviewing the literature available in the field of e-learning, there is a lack of information about the perspectives of English teachers in public high schools towards online courses.

1.1 Research Questions
In this sense, the problem of study focused on answering the following questions:
I. To what extent do you find (as an English-language teacher) the e-learning is beneficial and useful for your students?
II. To what degree were you able to deal with software tools to teach your students the English language during COVID-19 quarantine?
III. What are the major challenges and critical difficulties you found during your English language teaching through e-learning used amidst the COVID-19 epidemic?
IV. Were your students capable to understand and learn English language effectively using e-learning and software applications amidst COVID-19 pandemic?
V. What are major steps and advantageous methods needed for enhancing your e-learning experience when similar emergency cases occur and require the distance learning implementation?

1.2 Conceptual Framework

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The conceptual framework of this research depends on analyzing the emergency cases (like COVID-19) and their impact on the students' and English language teachers' experience in e-learning. The aim of this analysis is to locate major difficulties and hurdles that limit the wide range implementation of e-learning. The theoretical framework of this study is presented in figure (1).
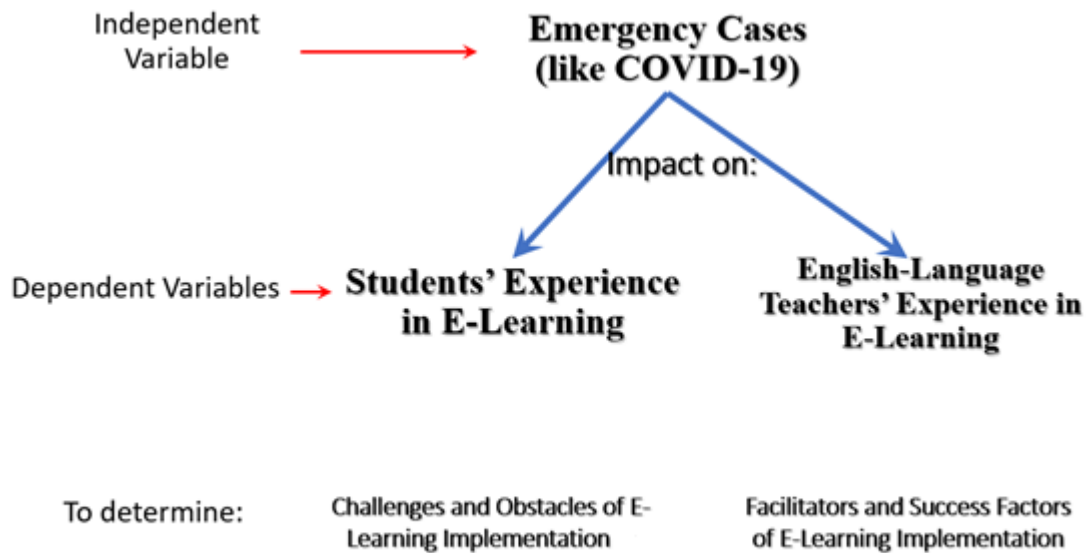
Fig. 1. Research conceptual framework.

2. Literature Review

Dhawan, S. (2020) conducted an analysis to investigate the impact of COVID-19 on education in India. Dhawan, S. reported that India used to give traditional lectures and education. The use of e-learning is new amidst the COVID-19 pandemic and several universities, colleges, and schools stuck with conventional learning approach. Dhawan, S. stated that global educational institutions had to depend completely on online learning and had no choice. Dhawan, S. made a literature review and found that students and teachers had lower level of preparedness to online teaching experience.

Teachers at Syrian English high schools' attitudes toward the internet and communication technologies are investigated (Albirini, 2006). The findings reflected teachers' positive attitudes towards the integration of technology within the learning process. Furthermore, (Othman et al., 2008) explored the impact of E-learning on student motivation in schools. The study's findings revealed that the e-learning experience could succeed if a proper and easy-to-use e-learning system is utilized in the learning process. Likewise, (Haverila & Barkhi, 2009) confirmed that online courses are important for quality education. Moreover, the results showed that technical knowledge proved to be a central competence for many teachers. (Pérezdel & Hernández ,2010) indicated that the advantage of educational technology causes online courses to gain increasing attention in education. Furthermore, their study revealed that

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online courses are an important tool that teachers may utilize to boost student motivation and education. However, (Soleymanpour et al., 2010) explained that students do better than those who rely heavily on traditional communication and interact with their mentors.

Generally, (Holley 2012) indicated that online courses provide high-quality education, reflecting better academic performance. He added that the number of undergraduate students who undertake online courses increases over time and that traditional teaching methods are receding. Likewise, (Afolabi 2017) investigated the use of open online educational resources by the first-year university undergraduates and their effect on their achievement. The results indicated that students' understanding of online skills, acceptability, perception, and competencies are of paramount importance to assist them in comprehending and mastering challenging subjects. Additionally, the study revealed that students achieved better results because they had a positive perception of online learning.

Ahn & McEachin, 2017 found similar results when they investigated E-school enrollment trends and evaluated the influence of e-schools on students' learning by comparing e-school outcomes to those in traditional public schools. The findings revealed that low-income families choose public schools with conventional teaching methods, whereas white students prefer e-schools when they are low-income. Remarkably, the results showed that students in e-schools performed lower on standardized tests than their counterparts in traditional public schools.

Abdel-Maksoud, 2018 explored the impact of virtualization technology on student motivation and learning. One hundred sixteen undergraduate students enrolled in a computer networking course at Egypt's universities participated in a developed semi study. The findings indicated that students that employed virtualization technology had higher marks and better motivation. In addition, Adlof et al., 2019 investigated the viability of an online vocabulary learning application. The results of their study, which involved high school students, revealed that the program is implemented. However, usage was lower than expected. Based on the evaluation, the results were positive. Students appeared to learn more vocabulary items and that educators can use such applications to help increase teenage reading comprehension and vocabulary.

Aeiad & Meziane, 2019 described the implementation of an architecture for a personalized and adaptive e-Learning system (APELS), which aims to progress the area. The scheme intends to provide users with a customized and adaptive learning environment based on freely available online materials. The goal of this study was to see if this system (APELS) can provide appropriate learning materials that meet the learners' demands. The findings revealed that the system is of high quality and meets the learning objectives for teaching purposes.

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Aljaser, 2019 conducted a study to determine the efficacy of an e-learning environment in improving academic achievement and attitudes toward learning English among 5th-grade primary students. The study concluded that the students who were assessed later had higher achievements than those tested previously. In the post-achievement exam and the English learning attitude scale, the results showed statistically significant differences in favor of the experimental group.

The impact of gamification of web-based learning on academic achievement and creative thinking among primary school students is investigated by Aljraiwi, 2019. The predicted effects are discovered using a quasi-experimental approach. After utilizing gamification, the researchers observed a high degree of academic accomplishment and innovative thinking. The impact of employing an online platform as a virtual classroom on student achievement, motivation, and attitudes is investigated (Ahmad & Osman, 2020). The research is conducted on 42 students enrolled in Sultan Qaboos University's "Educational and Information Technology" course. The study's findings revealed that the students performed better and were more motivated because they were enrolled in the virtual classroom.

2.1 The Purpose of the Study

This study investigates the perspectives of English language teachers towards the E-learning and online courses during the spread of the pandemic (COVID-19). In addition, it aims to determine success factors and critical limitations of e-learning implementation.

3. Methodology
3. 1 Research Methodology

The study uses a quantitative approach. A pre-validated questionnaire was used to collect data from the participants about their personal data, computer skills, perceptions towards the benefits and drawbacks of e-learning, as well as recommended solutions for measures to improve the e-learning process.

3.2 Participants

The sample of the study was 100 male and female teachers of English from random public high schools in Amman the capital city of Jordan. The female participants were 57 and 43 male participants. All teachers were Jordanian. Most of the teachers live in Amman and others live in other cities. The teachers' mother tongue is Arabic language. The teachers were selected based on experience in that selected teachers' experience range was (10.6) years. A pre-validated questionnaire was used to collect data from the participants about their data, computer skills, perceptions towards the benefits and drawbacks of e-learning, and recommended solutions for measures to improve the e-learning process, which should all be clearly stated. Hence, the purpose of the questionnaire was to determine the participant's level of agreement and disagreement with pre-defined concepts.

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3.3 Data Collection

The questionnaire is uploaded on an online website based on English language teachers' perspectives towards the e-learning and Online courses during the spread of the pandemic (COVID-19) (Zalat et al., 2021), (Koet & Aziz, 2021).

The questionnaire was self-administered. The participants were emailed a link to the questionnaire and a brief explanation of the study's goal and objectives. The sum of participants' acceptance or rejection responses (support or opposition) towards E-learning using computer software was measured. The total scores obtained by the participants on score sheets prepared by the researcher for this purpose were calculated to determine the participants' perspectives.

3.4 Data Analysis

The analysis of the responses of the teachers showed that in general teachers were dissatisfied with adopting on-line courses in teaching English. Teachers' positive perceptions were also important determinants of the success or failure of on-line courses, according to the replies. However, the extensive evaluation of respondents' responses from this questionnaire assists in the development of generalizations, allowing specific difficulties to be addressed in ways that will improve acceptance of online education.

The analysis of the responses of the English teachers regarding their perspectives on on-line courses suggests three important themes: (1) the need for having technical literacy including a solid knowledge in computers, operating software, and on-line connection mechanism, (2) how beneficial on-line courses to students, and (3) the challenges and difficulties that face teachers and students alike in utilizing on-line courses in the learning process.

4. Results and Discussion

The analysis of the responses of the teachers of English showed that, in general, teachers were dissatisfied with adopting online courses in teaching English. According to the replies, teachers' positive perceptions are also important determinants of the success or failure of online classes. However, the extensive evaluation of respondents' responses from this survey assists in the development of generalizations, allowing specific difficulties to be addressed in ways that will improve the acceptance of online education.

The analysis of the responses of the English teachers regarding their perspectives on online courses suggests three important themes: (1) the need for having technical literacy, including a solid knowledge in computers, operating software, and online connection mechanism, (2) how beneficial online courses to students, and (3) the challenges and difficulties that face teachers and students alike in utilizing online courses in the learning process.

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4.1 Teachers' Perspectives on the Need for Having Technical Literacy

The analysis of the teachers' responses revealed that most of them believe that having a solid knowledge of technology is the cornerstone of online learning. The teachers' responses ranged between (agree and strongly agree) on this particular point. These results are similar to (Pérezdel & Hernández, 2010), who found that online courses are a vital tool that teachers may utilize to enhance student motivation and education. However, teachers reflected various opposing perspectives regarding their ability to use technology. The justification behind such variation is due to the variation in teachers' motivation, previous knowledge, and willingness to engage themselves in certain courses, which enable them to use such technology with easiness and professionalism. Some teachers even voiced their desire to have such knowledge and asked vehemently for the course in computer science, internet, and online approaches for teaching to polish their skills and familiarize them more about this issue of concern.

It is sensed that some teachers are against online education because they believe that traditional education is better than online learning. This motivation is concealed by their inability to cope with technological issues. Moreover, some teachers opposed the idea and stated that it is time-consuming and yields poor results without even practicing it.

During the second semester of the year 2020, and because of the repercussions of the widespread of COVID-19 across the globe in general, and private and public schools started to recognize the dire need for having online course platforms as a substitute for traditional teaching methods. Teachers in public schools appeared reluctant and rejected the idea because they believed in its inefficiency and impracticality. On the other hand, the private schools had a better experience in this regard. Teachers rushed into providing online lessons, which they broadcast via private online platforms. The important idea to get from the affairs of the two sides is that the motivation, technical knowledge, and rules applied to teachers on both sides can vary clearly. Teachers in public schools appeared less motivated, unwilling, and less educated in technological matters. Private school teachers reflected opposing views, nevertheless.

4.2 Perspectives on How Beneficial Online Courses are to Students

The total number of completed surveys received 100 responses from teachers. The number of teachers who responded and the diversity of their answers is typical of the entire teacher population. Moreover, the reactions of the teachers' perspectives appeared somehow positive and encouraging of the advantages online courses can yield. Around 60 % of the teachers believe that teaching with computers offers a real advantage over the traditional method of instruction. A similar percentage of teachers reflected that E-learning facilitates information delivery to students. Around 75% of the teachers' responses came to support the contention that online courses save time and effort for teachers and students alike. Many teachers also believe that online classes provide rich resources and massive education. Most of the 'advantages' reiterated by the respondents were mainly about motivation and interaction. Teachers' responses to the ability to obtain learning resources from anywhere emphasize the

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power of online learning to overcome geographic barriers. The assumption that students become more motivated and interactive proved widespread across teachers' perceptions. Online learning's availability and breadth of resources, as well as the permanence of online discussions and the possibility to examine lectures and other face-to-face activities, were highlighted by respondents. Teachers also believe that online courses give a unique experience for them by accommodating a variety of learning styles and approaches.

4.3 Perspectives Regarding the Challenges and Difficulties Which Face Teachers and Students Alike in Utilizing Online Courses in the Learning Process

The results of this research indicate that there is little awareness and understanding of the nature of e-learning and the benefits it yields. For this reason, using online courses reflects some difficulties and challenges. Generally, teachers reflected negative attitudes by responding that the idea is doomed to failure because of the lack of seriousness from teachers and educational institutions, the poor technical infrastructure, the illiteracy of teachers in technical issues, and the lack of motivation. The salient viewpoint about online courses is that such courses are difficult to apply and incompetent. Most of the responses showed that online courses reduce teamwork and collaboration between students themselves and between students and teachers. However, a lower percentage of teachers believe that online courses are engaging in nature in that they allow inhibited and passive students to jump into the fore. Of the teachers, 70 percent of them believe that various technical issues hinder online learning. These results appeared to agree with (Haverila and Barkhi's, 2009) study that confirmed online courses are important tools for quality education. Technical knowledge has been proved to be a central competence for many teachers. Such issues include the inability of teachers to accommodate e-learning in their teaching methods because of the complex software. Second, some teachers appear illiterate concerning computers science. Third, the ability to log into the internet and surf the net seems very limited in that teachers prefer to do away with the whole e-learning process as a better alternative. The teachers require regular access to a computer and the internet. They also suggested a minimum standard for the computer system to allow efficient access to online student systems. However, some students do not have technology other than internet cafés, libraries, or friends' computers. Many who have a computer at home are likely to share it with partners. Many of the technical difficulties identified by respondents are aggravated if they do not have control of the software available on the computer they are using or have a slow or unreliable connection to the internet.

One of the highest-ranking disadvantages was the lack of interaction between teachers and students and between students themselves. Respondents cited interaction as the single most damaging factor. According to a more in-depth evaluation of the teachers' comments, respondents perceive a lack of commitment from teachers themselves to online communication and interaction. Because they believe online learning is inefficient, over half of the teachers (47%) expressed dissatisfaction with the lack of face-to-face contact in completely online courses, indicating a preference for traditional lectures and lessons. Another issue raised by teachers in their comments was the online submission of students' assignments. Some

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technological problems may cause the system to stop, slow down, or even block administering tests or submitting assignments.

Although online courses are not as beneficial as in-person classes, they are preferable to none. Virtual academic groups are already allowing students to access lessons and exercises and engage with teachers in ways that would have been difficult even a decade or two ago if an outbreak had shuttered schools. So, while we may be cautious of online learning, now is the moment to embrace and develop it.

5. Conclusions

The research looked at how English language teachers thought about the practicality and feasibility of using online courses to substitute traditional face-to-face instruction. Despite the multiple benefits mentioned by respondents, the negative aspects considerably exceeded the favorable ones in general during the COVID-19 (Zalat et al., 2021; Koet & Aziz, 2021). Furthermore, results revealed that it is significant (depending on the teachers' points of view) to make appropriate preparations and adequate provision of laptops and internet connection (infrastructure) to implement and benefit from e-learning technology. Moreover, findings indicated that it is vital to improving awareness among educators and students to use online courses. Additionally, it is crucial to increase the number of workshops, training sessions, and education meetings for teachers and students to use several web applications related to e-learning flexibly and easily. In addition, results confirmed that during the COVID-19 global quarantine, not all students and teachers had sufficient internet connection, laptops, and technology experience to implement e-learning. Thus, it is necessary to adopt effective strategic technology plans at the national level to promote e-learning implementation and use among teachers and students.

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