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**Exploring EFL Learners' Attitudes towards Online Learning during
Covid19 Pandemic Lockdown**

The case study of 3rd year students at the University of Bejaia, Algeria

A Dissertation submitted for the requirement of Master Degree in Linguistics

At The University of Bejaia

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Abstract

The COVID-19 pandemic has caused the temporary physical closure of higher education institutions all over the world. During this period, Algerian universities have been required to undertake distant and online teaching and learning. Thus, in order to maintain both academic achievement and keep teachers and learners safe and healthy, Abderhamane Mira University of Bejaia has implemented E-learning as an alternative learning and teaching measure. This present study aims to investigate EFL learners' attitude towards online learning during the Covid-19 pandemic lockdown period and shed light on the problems that students encounter during online learning. The present study is an attempt to investigate EFL learners' attitudes whether positive or negative towards online learning during the pandemic lockdown period online. In other words, this research tries to demonstrate the challenges of distance learning in Algerian higher education. This study was conducted using a questionnaire designed as a research instrument to collect data. The findings of this study reveal that most students hold a negative attitude towards online learning and prefer traditional (face-to-face) learning due to various problems they face while distance learning, such as lack of communication and interaction with teachers, lack of understanding of the material, and feeling unmotivated to take courses online.

Key words: Covid-19 lockdown, higher education, EFL learners' attitudes, online learning.

Dedication

I dedicate this simple work to

To My precious and lovely parents, for their unconditional love, prayers, encouragements
and for being a source of motivation

They always believed in me and pushed me forward to complete my studies successfully.

To the best brother ever: **Arab**

To all my family members

Special thanks to my aunties: **Rachida, Hakima, Chadia**

To all my cousins

To my friend and beloved **Rahma** who is always right by my side with whom I shared the
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Thank you all

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Dedication

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To my precious parents for the unconditional love, prayers, support and being the source of
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Thank you for everything you have done and still doing for my happiness and well-being

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To my dearest friends whom admires me all the time, thank you for all you have done for me

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List of Acronyms and Initialisms

- BOU: British Open University
- CBL: Computer Based Learning
- CMS: Course Management System
- COVID-19: Co: corona, V: virus, D: disease, 19: year 2019
- DE: Distance Education
- EFL: English as a Foreign Language
- E-learning: Electronic Learning
- ICT: Information Communication Technology
- LMS: Learning Management System
- MOOC: Massive Open Online Course
- MOODLE: Modular Objective-Oriented Dynamic Learning Environment
- OMLS: Online Management Learning System
- SARS: Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome
- SLA : Second Language Acquisition
- SNDL : National Online Documentation System
- SPSS : Statistical Package for Social Sciences
- UKOU: United Kingdom Open University
- VLE: Virtual Learning Environment

LIST OF TABLES

- **Table 1:** Students' gender.....28
- **Table 2:** Students' age.....29
- **Table 3:** Students' evaluation of their English level.....30
- **Table 4:** Digital platforms students' have used during Covid-19.....31
- **Table 5:** Students' evaluation of E-learning platform.....32
- **Table 6:** Whether students' faced difficulties while using online learning.....33
- **Table 7:** Whether online courses increase students' English level.....34
- **Table 8:** Whether lack of interaction and communication with teachers affects students learning process.....35
- **Table 9:** Whether students' feel motivated and comfortable during online learning.36
- **Table 10:** Students' preference37
- **Table 11:** Academic cheating and plagiarism in online learning38

List of Figures

- **Figure 1:** Synchronous vs Asynchronous Learning.....8
- **Figure 2:** Moodle Platform of Bejaia University.....13
- **Figure 3:** Corona-virus disease (Covid-19).....17
- **Figure 4:** Students' gender28
- **Figure 5:** Students' age.....29
- **Figure 6:** Students' evaluation of their English level.....30
- **Figure 7:** Digital platforms students' have used during Covid-19.....31
- **Figure 8:** Students' evaluation of E-learning platform.....32
- **Figure 9:** Whether students' faced difficulties while using online learning.....33
- **Figure 10:** Whether online courses increase students' English level.....34
- **Figure 11:** Whether lack of interaction and communication with teachers affects students learning process.....35
- **Figure 12:** Whether students' feel motivated and comfortable during online learning.....36
- **Figure 13:** Students' preference37
- **Figure 14:** Academic cheating and plagiarism in online learning39

Table of Contents

Abstract.....	I
Dedication	II
Dedication.....	III
Acknowledgements.....	IV
List of acronyms and Initialisms.....	V
List of Tables	VI
List of figures.....	VII

General introduction.....	1
1. Statement of the problem	1
2. Research questions.....	2
3. Research Aim and significance of study	2
4. Research Design and Data Collection.....	2
5. Population and Sample.....	3
6. Structure of the Study.....	3

Chapter I: Theoretical Background

Part one: Theoretical background

Introduction.....	5
-------------------	---

Section one: Theoretical background

1. Distance learning system.....	5
2. Definition of distance learning.....	6
2.1 Types of distance learning.....	7
a. Synchronous and asynchronous learning.....	7
b. Hybrid distance education.....	8
c. Computer based distance learning.....	9
d. Fixed Time Online Courses.....	9
3. Distance learning in Algerian higher education.....	9
4. E-learning platform.....	10
4.1 Historical background of E-learning.....	10
4.1.1 Definition of E-learning.....	10
4.1.2 Characteristics of E-learning.....	10
a. Anywhere, anytime, anyone.....	11
b. Provides reflection opportunities.....	11
c. Effective learning.....	11
d. Easy using.....	11
e. Personalized learning.....	11
f. Less impact on environment.....	12
5. E-learning at the university of Bejaia.....	12
6. EFL learners and E-learning platform.....	14

7. The importance of E-learning platform during covid-19 quarantine period.....	14
---	----

Section two: EFL learning and teaching during Covid-19 pandemic lockdown

Introduction	16
1. Covid-19 sanitary crisis.....	16
1.2 Definition of Covid-19.....	17
1.3 Quarantine period in Algeria.....	17
2. Learning and teaching during pandemic lockdown.....	18
2.1 Language learning.....	18
3. EFL learners using E-learning platform during lockdown period in Algeria higher education	19
4. Teachers and learners communication during distance learning.....	20
5. Advantages and disadvantages of E-learning	20
6. Online learning challenges faced by EFL learners during lockdown	21
Conclusion.....	23

Chapter II: Practical Part

Introduction	25
--------------------	----

Part one: Research design and methodology

1.1- Description of the participants.....	26
1.1.1 Population and sample.....	26
1.2- The instrument.....	26
1.2.1 Aim of the questionnaire.....	26
1.2.2 Description of the students' questionnaire	26
Conclusion.....	27

Part two: Data Analysis and discussion

2.1- Data analysis and discussion of the students' questionnaire.....	28
2.2- Discussion and analysis of the result.....	40
2.3- Limitation of the study.....	42
2.4- Suggestions for further research.....	42
- Conclusion	43
General conclusion.....	44

Reference

Appendix

General introduction

General Introduction

The World Health Organization reported a new coronavirus outbreak in January 2020, classifying it as a pandemic public health crisis of worldwide importance. There is not a single area that remains without the effect of COVID-19. It is observed that every sector and everything in the world is affected. A worldwide lockdown was implemented on March 12th, 2020 to prevent the diseases from spreading further. The quarantine caused several schools, academic institutions, and universities to temporarily close. The COVID-19 pandemic had an impact on the world's learning and educational system and this critical situation has pushed Algerian higher education to take measures to protect against the spread of the coronavirus. As a consequence, traditional face-to-face teaching and learning have been replaced by online courses or distance learning. These circumstances forced EFL learners and teachers to study and work casually from home by using online platforms (E-learning, Moodle, SSDL) with various electronic devices such as computers, smart phones, and many different applications like Google Meet and Zoom within the internet availability in order to finish their courses and syllabus.

1- Statement of the problem:

In this critical sanitary crisis, the ministry of higher education urged universities to consider alternative teaching and learning methods so as to complete the program. As a result, most Algerian universities used E-learning platforms as a teaching and learning tool to communicate and interact with each other. Abderahmane Mira University of Bejaia started using online academic space in April 2020 to upload courses, assignments, and provide quizzes and exams. Therefore, this study aims to explore EFL learners' attitude towards the pandemic lockdown period. Furthermore, this research focuses mainly on learner's standpoints towards the effect of online learning on students' academic achievement and studies the problems they have faced in using technological tools.

2- Research Questions

The present study attempts to elicit answers to the following questions:

- What is EFL learners' attitude towards online learning during the COVID-19 quarantine period?
- What kinds of problems and obstacles are faced by EFL learners while using an e-learning platform?
- What kind of interaction do students and teachers have?

3- Research Aim and he Significance of the Study

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, Algerian higher education had to carry out the continuity of learning process and academic achievement by moving from conventional learning (face-to-face) into online classes through an E-learning platform, and this critical situation was very challenging for both EFL learners and teachers. In spite of the fact that learners are very familiar with technology, learners have reported facing different problems during the online classes, mainly the inability to buy a computer or smart phone, WIFI and internet viability, access to E-learning platforms, and a lack of interaction and communication between teachers and learners.

This research study aims to explore EFL learners' attitudes towards online learning during the COVID-19 quarantine period and its effect on their language learning process. In addition, it aims to investigate students' opinions about their online learning experience compared to traditional (face-to-face) learning, learning achievement, and student engagement for the online courses at the University Abderahmane Mira Bejaia. The significance of this study is that it will provide insights into exploring the online learning course method.

4- Research Design and Data collection

The main purpose of this study is to explore learners' attitudes toward online learning during the COVID-19 pandemic lockdown period. In order to explore the subject under

General introduction

investigation, we have adopted a quantitative method. To achieve the objective of this study, we relied on a questionnaire designed and distributed to a group of 3rd year students. The questions (close and open-ended questions) are asked so as to learn about the learner's attitude towards the Internet during the quarantine period.

5- Population and Sample

The population of our study will cover 3rd year students learners of the department of English at the University Abderhamane Mira of Bejaia during the academic year 2021/2022. The sample of our study is based on (54) students of different ages and genders selected randomly from the whole population.

6- Structure of the study

The current study is divided into two main chapters:

- Chapter one starts with a general introduction of the topic under this research study. The first part deals with the theoretical background and it is composed of two main sections; the first one represents the concept of a distance learning system that includes diverse definitions and its types. It also represents an overview of distance learning in Algerian higher education and an E-learning platform, followed by a historical background, definition, and its characteristics. In addition, the importance of the E-learning platform during the COVID-19 quarantine period. Hence, the second section is devoted to the definition of COVID-19 and the lockdown period in Algeria. Furthermore, it examines the sanitary crisis, the learning and teaching processes in Algerian higher education during this time period, and the use of an E-learning platform. It also presents the advantages and disadvantages of an e-learning platform. In addition to the issues and challenges that learners face during their online learning process.
- Chapter Two represents the practical part of the present study, and it includes three main sections. Section one deals with the methodological part, which is devoted to research design and data collection tools. Therefore, the second section is mainly concerned with the analysis of the gathered data through the questionnaires, the results, and the discussion of these results. The last section ends with a general conclusion that summarizes the study findings and the answers to the research questions, their implications, and suggestions for further researches.



Chapter I

Theoretical Part

Chapitre 01 : theoretical background

Section one: Theoretical background

Introduction

The COVID-19 pandemic wreaked havoc on all sectors around the world, including higher education, with Algerian universities conducting their pedagogical activities online. Online learning is unquestionably distinct from traditional learning (Rachmah, 2020); thus, they use electronic devices to stay in touch and communicate with one another via an E-learning platform. In this first chapter, section one, presents a review of distance education and explores distance learning types, characteristics, and E-learning platforms in Algeria, highlighting the importance of E-learning platforms for EFL learners during the pandemic lockdown to continue their learning achievement during the COVID-19 lockdown.

1. Distance Learning System

Distance education is described as an academic institution's formal education in which the learning community is separated and interactive telecommunications systems are employed to interconnect students, materials, and lecturers (Simonson, 2009). Distant learning, also known as distance education, e-learning, and online learning, is a form of schooling wherein teachers and students are separated during learning and technological aspects are utilized to promote academic teacher and learner connection. Indeed, Sumner J (2000) state that there is a persistent correlation between technology and online education. When time and place cannot be worked out between instructor and student, distance learning is a beneficial tool and resource. It provides rapid and extensive contact, and because of its system developments and functionalities, it offers a great approach to education.

A Learning Management System, or LMS, is used to provide online classes. However, students and teachers may complete their coursework, including examinations, straight online using an e-learning platform. Teaching methods and self-paced exercises, audio and video recordings, teleconferences, interactive learning items, and video chats with fellow learners or asynchronous conversations are indeed available in the LMS.

2. Definition of Distance Learning

Online programs in higher education have increased exponentially since the internet's inception. Online education is a class form in which teachers and students communicate and collaborate through electronic media such as email, online meetings, and learning management systems that are provided asynchronously. Sir Isaac Pitman conducted the first distance education course in the modern sense in the 1840s, when he presented a system of shorthand by sending texts converted into shorthand on postcards and receiving transcriptions from his learners in exchange for correction. Pitman's approach included a critical innovation: student feedback. The establishment of standard postal rates throughout England in 1840 made this system feasible (Anjana, 2018. p, 4).

Distance education has evolved and altered over the course of a century (Schlosser & Simonson, 2006). According to Moore and Kearsley (1996) and Peters (2008), distance learning has progressed through three generations: correspondence study, the first open universities in the early 1970s, and the usage of digitized distance education in the 1990s. According to Wedemeyer (1981), the term distance education is commonly used very loosely with autonomous learning, online learning, and independent learning. Independent learning is defined as learning that is characterized by student autonomy and isolation from educational authority. Meanwhile, the term external study is commonly used in the United Kingdom and Commonwealth nations to refer to extramural or off-campus education. However, open learning became popular following the establishment of the British Open University (BOU), which offers part-time education possibilities to distance students. Due to Williams, Paprock, and Covington (1999), the term "open learning" has become a catchphrase for the same concept as decentralized education. The rise of open institutions that use distant learning systems, on the other hand, has not helped to clarify the issue.

Furthermore, new words such as distributed education, online courses, web-based learning, flexible learning, open and remote learning have developed online education learning. The former is a word that appears often in European Commission documents (Keegan, 2000). Regarding these difficult challenges in identifying the domain of distance learning, it is vital to remember that the objective of a definition is to simplify rather than to confuse.

Chapitre 01 : theoretical background

Nevertheless, there is still some uncertainty and disagreement concerning distance education terminology. There have been differences of opinion among authors over what defines distance education (Keegan, 1980). As a result, it is suggested that DE requires a theoretical foundation. Garrison (2000, p. 3) defines theory as a logical and systematic ordering of ideas, concepts, and models with the goal of building meaning to define, explain, and shape practice.

2.1 Types of Distance Learning

Distance learning type includes:

A. Synchronous and Asynchronous learning

Distance education is classified into two categories synchronous and asynchronous learning. Synchronous technology for online learning has been demonstrated to simulate, replicate, and even enhance parts of the conventional classroom as both a contrast and a complement to asynchronous tools (Martin and Bollinger, 2018). Therefore, the synchronous learning method takes place at the same time; this signifies that the instructor, learners, and others interact in an online format at a certain time using a specific online medium, such as videoconferencing and live chat. This method restricts the student's capacity to study at their own speed.

Asynchronous learning refers to training in which learners acquire educational content, complete assessments, and communicate at their own time. It facilitates learning without requiring learners and teachers to be in the same place at the same time. Asynchronous communications offers course management systems such as CompusCruisr LMS, Moodle, and Sakai that have been developed to support online interaction, allowing learners to organize discussions, post and reply to messages, upload and access multimedia.

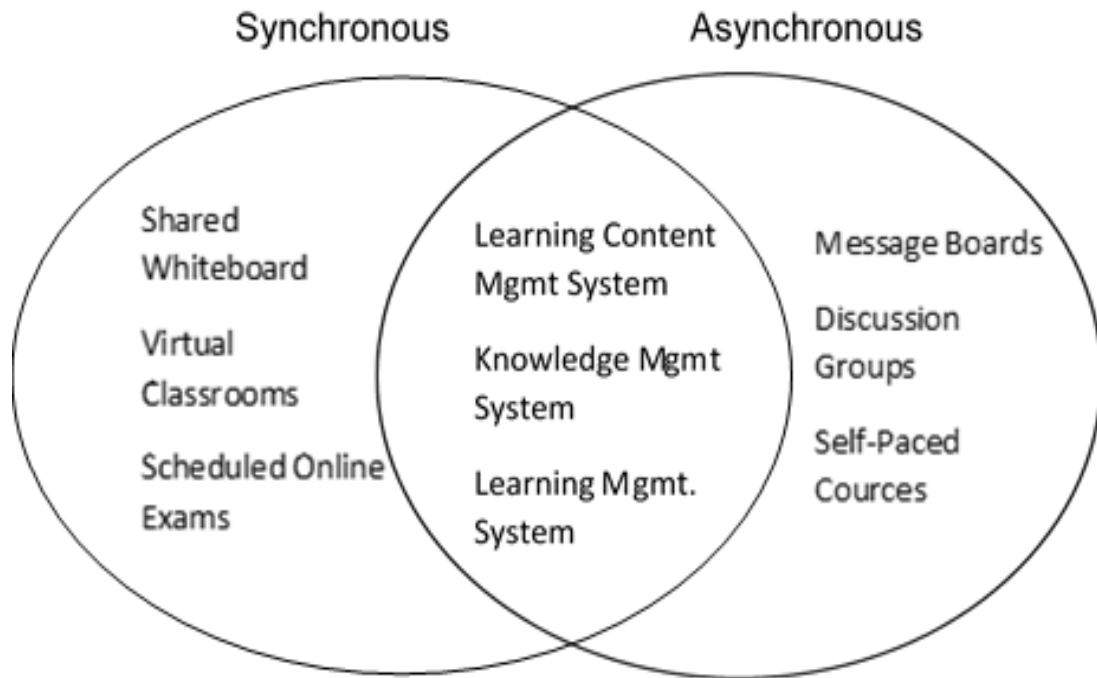


Figure 01: Synchronous vs Asynchronous Learning

(<https://demiblogger.wordpress.com/>)

B. Hybrid Distance Education

Hybrid learning is an educational method in which some students take the class in person while others participate online from their home through video conferencing devices and software. Teachers can instruct both remote and in-person students at the same time. In the hybrid learning process, both the online and in-person components during the online course interact with each other in an efficient way. Online activities enhance those undertaken in the class. Retrieved from: (<https://dld.brown.edu/definition-terms-online-vs-hybrid>).

C. Computer Based Distance Learning

Computer-based distance learning is defined as the "application of telecommunications, computers, and other electronic devices to enable learners to use instruction that originates from a distance location" (Cheng, CH. et al, 1991, p. 16). In other words, CBL is a synchronized, fixed-time class provided via computers, commonly in a computer lab. This is mainly prevalent in established institutions with accessibility to the required technology tools.

D. Fixed Time Online Courses

Fixed-time online courses are a form of synchronized classes which involves all online participants joining a certain online site at a particular time and location (e.g., a webinar). It's a frequent format for online learning that allows learners to access the learning site at prescribed times, where they should complete a pre-planned lesson assignment at the same time. Chatrooms and discussion groups are frequently used in these assignments, which encourage learners' interaction. However, there is limited flexibility for self-learning in this method.

E. Open Schedule Online Courses

A massive open online course (MOOC) is a Web-based class with open access. MOOCs offer learners access to educational resources that would often be obtained in a traditional education context, for example, presentations, videos, learning resources, and written assignments. Learners may be overwhelmed by the amount of data presented to them. They may be lacking in motivation to complete the course in an efficient manner.

3. Distance Learning in Algerian Higher Education

The evolution of distance higher education may be traced back to the decision by the South African government in 1962 to establish the University of South Africa as a distance education university (Boucher cited in Holmberg, 1995; Schlosser & Simonson, 2006). DE at the university level has been attributed to the establishment of the British Open University or Open University of the United Kingdom (UKOU) in 1969, with the first student enrolling in 1971 (Holmberg, B, 1995, Keegan, D, 1986, Schlosser & Simonson, 2006).

In today's world of the COVID19 pandemic, for some months, many Algerian universities were required to suspend all in-person types of education teaching and learning for the benefit of the students (Lassassi, M. et al. 2020). Thus, learners used Moodle and e-learning platforms as a tool to complete their learning programs. Hence, according to a study conducted by Lassassi, M. et al. (2020), different issues arose at Algerian universities: Due to a lack of training and expertise in this new form of teaching, teachers' use of equipment is insufficient for effectiveness.

4. E-learning Platform

4.1 Historical Background of E-learning

4.1.1 Definition of E-learning

According to Isaac Pitman (1840), the origins of e-learning may be traced back to the past century, with the appearance of its concepts from teaching learning-based correspondence. Therefore, the first attempts at e-learning date back to 1924, when Ohio State University professor Sidney Pressey developed the Automatic Teacher, the world's first electronic learning system (Sander, T. 2019). In fact, Sidney Pressey, who created the Automatic Teacher in 1924, produced the first attempts at an offline e-learning technology. Donald Bitzer, on the other hand, developed the PLATO, the first e-learning system capable of managing internet networking, in 1960 (Sander, T. 2019). Thus, Algeria launched an e-learning platform in 2006 in partnership with "Thomson" and "Microsoft". This part of the service offers 4,000 lessons and courses that are mainly designed to educate in ICT and communication expertise (Bin Herzallah, 2021, p.77).

An LMS, or an E-learning platform, is a software program that contains a number of devices that enable teachers to manage their lectures (Tadlaoui, et al 2019, p. 224).

Moreover, an E-learning platform is a system that offers effective services for the six academic activities of creativity, organization, distribution, interaction, collaboration, and evaluation (Kats, Yefim, 2010. p.31).

Furthermore, according to Koohang and Harman, "e-learning is the transmission of education (all activities related to educating, instructing, and studying) using multiple electronic means."

Based on the preceding definitions, E-learning may be defined as an effective usage of the Internet to enhance the transfer of learning, competencies, and knowledge.

4.1.2 Characteristics of E-learning Platform

In this section we have six main characteristics (retrieved from: www.vapulus.com)

a. Anywhere, Anytime, Anyone

The development of the Internet, high-potential corporate networks, and excessive-speed computing devices and computer systems will make learning available to individuals 24 hours a day, seven days a week around the world. This could allow groups to distribute schooling and essential facts to multiple locations effortlessly and comfortably. Workers can then receive training when it is convenient for them, whether at home or in the workplace.

b. Provides Reflection Opportunities

Learners-centered E-learning allows students to access content relevant to their personality or personal circumstances through a thought-provoking, self-reflective educational examination.

c. Effective Learning

E-learning has a beneficial impact because it makes content easier to understand, which leads to higher certification, exam, and assessment scores. It increases the employee's capacity to obtain and apply methods or knowledge in the workplace by aiding in the retention of information for a long period of time.

d. Easy Using

E-learning is very simple to utilize and it allows students to take charge of their own learning and discover what they need speedily. Thus, through a lecture design that includes a sound user basis, learners are expected to navigate the course intuitively thanks to the course design.

e. Personalized Learning

Instead of talking to the learning audience as a whole, content learner-centered e-learning talks straight to the student as an individual. This contributes to the impression of a personalized learning experience and fosters an emotional bond with the subject.

f. Less Impact on Environment

Since eLearning is a paperless method of learning, it preserves the environment to a large extent because no trees are chopped down to obtain paper. According to a research on eLearning courses, distance-based learning programs utilized around 90% less electricity and created 85% fewer CO₂ emissions when compared to typical campus-based educational courses.

5. E-learning Platform at the University of Bejaia

Due to the speedy enlargement of the web and therefore the development of ICT's or data and communication technologies within the recent decades in terms of speed services, sounds, images, and communication everywhere the globe through totally different technological devices connected by networks, numerous names are attributed to e-learning as well as on-line education, distance learning, virtual learning and electronic learning. On the other side, e-learning platform is defined as an integration of online services such as information, tools, resources, and course content management, registration, group creating and courses to be provided to the participants as teachers, trainers and learners as well as the administration (Retrieved from: 9 Advantages of Powerful Learning Platforms or LMS <https://www.cae.net>).

The total conception of e-learning is split into 2 words: the word "e" refers to electronic, easy, everyone, everything and engaging" (Adeoye et al. 2020, p.29); and learning that refers to the method of gathering information from a teacher, self-study or experience. However, the complete term indicates various meanings and definitions given to the current conception "e-learning". The term e-learning is pointed out by (Dudenry & Hockley, 2007) as "teaching and learning mainly done at a distance, usually via a personal computer and the internet", they define it also as "learning that takes place using technologies, such as CD-ROMS and portable devices like mobile phones".

E-learning platform includes varied names which are all relating to virtual learning at the side of the association of the Internet. It refers to a virtual classroom, virtual learning environment (VLE), or, learner management system (LMS). It is an internet learning which bases on the employment of internet; associate environment during which each the academics and therefore the learners are connected just about and academically.

Chapitre 01 : theoretical background

Online learning platforms encompasses completely different forms together with Code academy, Edex, Udemy, skill share, Cousira, Phiralslight, Future learn and Moodle (Kyriaki ,2020). MOODLE is a form of e-learning platform. It is a form of LMS or learner atmosphere system, it's associate open, a free system and out there for all, Nagwa has entailed that the word MOODLE “was originally an acronym for Modular Object-Oriented Dynamic Learning Environment” (Nagwa, A. Soliman. 2014). The e-learning platform of the University of Bejaia is the distance education platform of the University of Bejaia makes it doable to form an internet learning atmosphere promoting exchanges and interactions between students and lecturers around academic content.

It permits students to consult online or transfer educational content, send work to be corrected, consult their notes, and so forth. Inside such a platform a learner may find these virtual libraries:

- Technical Engineer (IT)
- National Online Documentation System (SNDL)
- Magreb Virtual Science Library (MVSL)
- Science Direct (SD)



Figure 02: Moodle Platform of Bejaia University retrieved from: <https://elearning.univ-bejaia.dz/> (2022)

6. EFL Learners and E-learning

E-learning is an associate innovative means of teaching and learning at any time and space. It is thought-about as a pillar of a victorious remote learning throughout the healthful crisis since it saved the tutorial year from blockage. We have a tendency to could conclude that the Corona Virus pandemic has afforded a chance for the scholars to expertise a distance learning while using Internet yet on use completely different technological devices, the concepts of Distance education and distance learning are used as synonymous in the field of education in terms of distance in time and space between the teacher and the student (White, C. 2009).

E-learning platform provides the learner with opportunities not solely to receive data and to do his assignments however rather to assess his performance through tests also on recognize his grades. It offers affordances and facilities to communicate, act and collaborate through cluster discussion, projects, forums and video conferences. It will increase interactivity between the teachers and therefore the learner, learner's role becomes more active and can develop his autonomous learning. The student becomes more active in distinction to ancient learning within which his role is passive expecting his teacher to impart and to transfer data and courses (Kaddeche, S. et al. 2020).

Additionally, once EFL learners are using e-learning tools (such as wikis, blogs, Facebook, WhatsApp, and so on) might cut back the anxiety and increase motivation. EFL students might create use of e-learning in terms of up their vocabulary still as their speaking skills. Therefore, they are conscious of its quality in communication using the English language. However, alternative students were unable to learn from the virtual learning because of varied problems as technical and material problems, lack of connection to access to the Internet.

7. The Importance of E-learning Platform during Covid19 Quarantine Period

Technology is changing into more and more in individuals' personal, skilled and learning lives (Dudenry & Hockley, 2007). In different words, it is the core of information that helps solve problems. It has vied an important role in developing varied

Chapitre 01 : theoretical background

fields resembling business, industry, drugs then on. Like many different sectors, technology has generally affected the sphere of education principally the upper establishments and universities. In fact, teaching/ learning processes have seen a good modification in terms of the students' role beside the teachers', in teaching learning strategies and in body services, (Ali, M. et al. 2021) in their research study points out that the use of 'e- learning Moodle may develop EFL students' language proficiency and independent learning by communication, sharing knowledge between the instructor and the students". Teaching and learning processes are constantly advancing as a result of the rapid evolution and development of ICT and its link with e-learning and the internet.

E-learning has contributed an important role not solely in EFL teaching and learning however conjointly within the whole instructional system and all told levels. Indeed, it enhances the standard of education and a lot of significantly the upper one; it prepares the teacher and therefore the students to grasp a way to subsume new technologies overall the world; it overcomes the obstacles of time and space and fewer cost; it helps scholars become more freelance and autonomous in their learning, and the teacher's role is guide and a facilitator. In the same context, Darcy Son (2012) views that e-learning offers students own space for learning since they can follow their programs, repeat their missed lessons during face-to face learning and doing the activities; it is a tool that improves students' English proficiency. It will increase communication among the students themselves, and between the students and academics through emails, dialogue rooms, and discussion boards. Additionally, e-learning as a method assists the teacher in delivering the lecture in a well-designed, regular, and conventional format (new technologies in fact design). It helps him to the supply of the courses and program throughout all the year and a protracted period. It provides an opportunity for the teacher to assess and evaluate his students in a limited period of time.

1.2 Section Two: EFL Learning and Teaching during Covid19 Pandemic Lockdown

Introduction

Algerian higher education has begun distance learning through the use of E-learning (Moodle) for remote foreign language learning and teaching processes to adapt to the current situation since the beginning of the COVID-19 disease's spread. This second section presents a review of EFL learning and teaching during the COVID-19 pandemic lockdown. First, it describes the COVID-19 pandemic, the quarantine period, and the impact of the lockdown on the Algerian higher education learning process. Then it tackles the subjects of learning and teaching, language learning, and the use of E-learning platforms in higher education during this current period, in particular. Afterward, this section sheds light on the difference between conventional (face-to-face) and online learning, particularly the communication between teachers and learners in the confinement period. Finally, this section ends with motivation and online learning, the advantages and disadvantages of online learning (E-learning platform), and the problems faced during the use of an E-learning platform.

1. COVID-19 Sanitary Crisis

COVID-19 is one of the major diseases that the globe has seen in the 21st century. Initial examination revealed that the ecological agent was a new coronavirus identified as SARS-COV2 (Hasöksüz, M. et al. 2020). Moreover, the recent outbreak of the new coronavirus pandemic in Wuhan, China, started in early December 2019. As a result of the infection's widespread and severe nature in over 213 countries worldwide, the World Health Organization declared it a public health crisis of international significance (Mohan BS, Nambiar V, 2020).

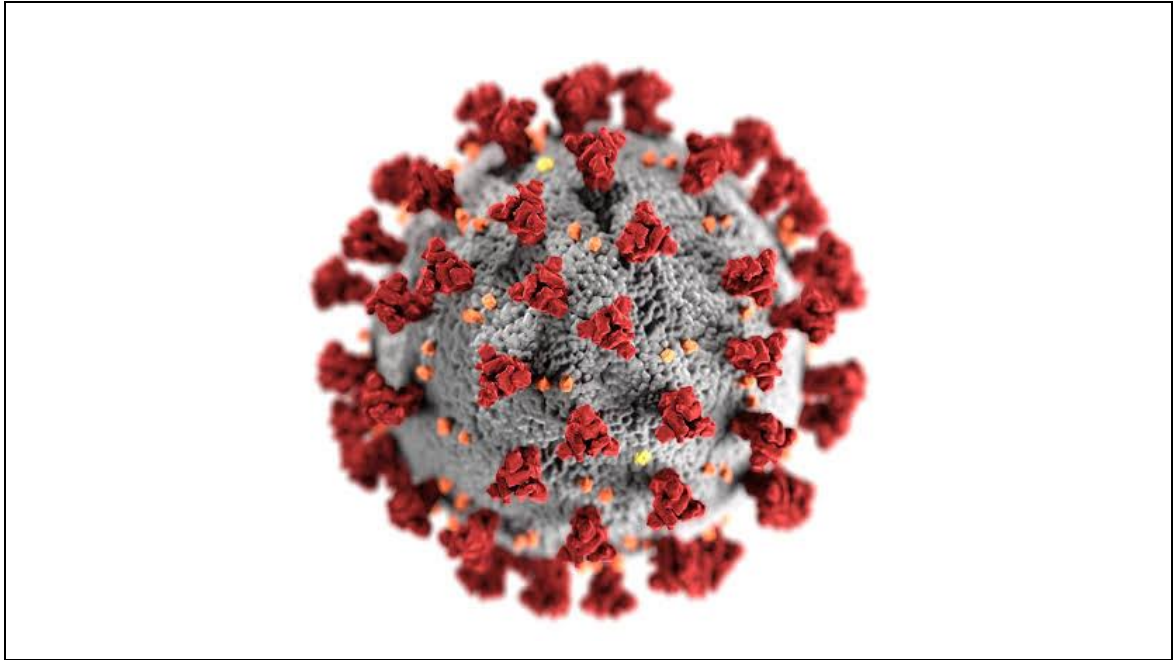


Figure 03: Corona-virus disease (Covid-19) (<https://www.who.int/fr/news/item/29-06-2020-covidtimeline>)

1.2 Definition of COVID-19

COVID-19 is defined as a highly infectious respiratory illness caused by coronavirus. SARS-CoV-2 is thought to be transferred from one individual to another by droplets produced by an infected individual when they cough, speak, or sneeze (retrieved from: <https://www.cancer.gov/publications/dictionaries/cancer-terms/def/covid-19>).

1.3 Quarantine Period in Algeria

One of the oldest, most efficient, most dreaded, and most confusing ways of managing infectious disease epidemics is quarantine. Quarantine is defined as the isolation of individuals who are suspected of having been exposed to an infectious disease but are not sick. It can be applied at a person, group, or category level and generally includes restrictions to the home or a specified location. Quarantine might be optional or obligatory (Cetron M, Landwirth J, 2005, p. 325).

Hence, Algeria, like the rest of the world, is affected by COVID 19. As reported by the Algerian health minister, it is the third most afflicted country in Africa, and it was

Chapitre 01 : theoretical background

classified as being in phase 3 of the pandemic on March 23. Starting from March 9, when the number of infected persons was reported to reach 20 cases, the Algerian government has initiated precautionary measures, including international travel limitations, public gathering restrictions, isolation and confinement, prevention campaigns, and lockdown (Lounis, M. Bagal, D.K. 2020).

Thus, the Algerian education sector took several measures to prevent the spread of the Covid-19. The higher education system continued their learning process by shifting from the conventional (face-to-learning) to the virtual world during the lockdown period. Despite its benefits and drawbacks, the digital world has become the only way to do academic research.

2. Learning and Teaching during Pandemic Lockdown

The epidemic of COVID-19 has altered the education system. The majority of instructors were obliged to make a rapid transition from traditional teaching to virtual learning; therefore, they used electronic devices such as LMS, Google Meet, Facebook, and emails to stay connected with each other. The shutdown of universities and academic institutions in Algeria has affected the regular development of the learning process and tested this stream's capacity to deal with a situation that necessitates the use of new advanced technology (Khattala A, Houichi A, 2021).

However, Algeria in the lockdown has adopted and recognized E-learning platform as the most relevant alternative to maintain the teaching and learning process. Despite the fact that teachers and students were unfamiliar with this type of education, the shift to online education was urgent, which may have harmed the quality of the learning and teaching process, and hence learning results in general (Khattala A, Houichi A, 2021).

2.1 Language learning

Learning is a process in which people study to acquire or acquire knowledge or skills. Second language acquisition (SLA) refers to the process of learning another language after learning the mother tongue. Learning a second language is a process of internalizing a second language after establishing a first language. Learning is defined as a process between acquiring and utterance. Language acquisition is very similar to the process children use to acquire first and second languages. It requires meaningful interaction in the target language, a natural communication in which speakers are not

Chapitre 01 : theoretical background

concerned with the form of their expressions but with the messages they convey and understand (Krashen, 2002, p. 1).

Language learning has experienced significant changes in communities where technology is widely used. Furthermore, the language learning process has changed as a result of new perspectives from learners on the ideal place and time for language learning activities. Hence, technology allows students to create their own experiential learning since they have independence of time and place in carrying out the educational process (Kukulska-Hulme, A. 2016).

There are two main approaches that may be used in the learning process: the structural and the communicative approach. The structural approach to language learning focuses on language structures and their significance. However, the communicative approach to language learning promotes pragmatic language knowledge. Each approach comes with its own set of benefits and drawbacks. Thus, combining the two approaches to complement each other is required to achieve maximal learning objectives (Zhou, G. Niu, X. 2015).

3. EFL learners using E-learning Platform during Lockdown period in Algerian Higher Education

Technology has completely changed and influenced the teaching and learning processes in higher education during the pandemic lockdown. Most Algerian universities and institutions have adopted distance learning.

Language learning has been made easier by the introduction of educational platforms. These platforms are indeed renowned as Online Management Learning Systems (OMLS) or Course Management Systems (CMS). Therefore, these tools can serve teachers in posting and evaluating activities and assessments for their learners. Most of these platforms are paid, such as Blackboard, whereas others, like Moodle, are free and accessible for both the teacher and her learners (Ghouanane N, 2020, p. 29).

4. Teachers and Learners Communication during Distance Learning

Online learning provides time and location flexibility. This adaptability implies that the teacher and the student can collaborate for the purpose of learning in an environment even if they are physically separated. According to Moore (1993), transactional distance can take place based on the teacher and learner's characteristics. This concept describes a situation based on the teacher and student's responsibility attributes in the learning environment's design and learning process (Durak G, Çankaya S, 2021, p. 220).

Online environments tend to attract the interest of shy learners more than traditional settings. It is important to create chances for interaction and communication between students and teachers in online learning. Furthermore, in order to avoid fatigue or a loss of interest when learning online, learners should take advantage of possibility to collaborate with other online students. They can also provide encouragement and help to stay motivated. Hence, the efficiency and effectiveness of interaction in online courses are major elements in overcoming the restrictions of online communication (Hung et al, 2010).

5. Advantages and Disadvantages of E-learning Platform

Due to the critical situation of the spread of COVID-19, Algerian higher education, like any other in the world, has adopted e-learning and many electronic devices such as the E-learning platform to continue the pedagogical learning process. E-learning emerges to represent an innovative method to provide an interactive learning environment focused on students that is well-planned in promoting and accessible to any person, any place, and at any time by utilizing the features and investments of online and digital technologies in accordance with educational design concepts appropriate for an open, flexible, and distributed classroom environment.

The following points are some of the most significant advantages and disadvantages of e-learning (Reem Z, 2020, p.728):

- **Ease of movement:** Because students can take their laptops everywhere and put teaching and learning resources on them, they can access them whenever they want.

Chapitre 01 : theoretical background

- **Easy use and convenience:** Easy-use and online lessons have become simpler to utilize than traditional learning.
- **Strategic Employment:** Students have access to a wide range of educational resources via the internet, making it simpler for them to select the most appropriate one for themselves and strategically use it in their professional lives, which is not possible with conventional educational techniques.
- **Flexibility:** Online classes can be used during the academic semester when instructors follow up on the actual application of science concepts in the class and instantly correct students' errors and follow-up effectively with them.
- **Simplicity:** By simplifying teaching and learning resources using online lessons, it enables learners to focus more on learning.
- **Low cost:** An online lesson is less expensive than traditional instructional methods.

In contrast, the disadvantages of e-learning can be summarized as follows:

- Learners who use e-learning may become socially isolated.
- E-learning requires students to be self-motivated and capable of managing their time effectively.
- Low communication skills among students during online classes.
- Online educators appear to be more concerned with theoretical than practical issues.
- Lack of face-to-face interaction between teachers and learners, learners and learners.
- Cheating by students in online activities and examinations (Reem Z, 2020, p.728).

6. Online Learning Challenges Faced by EFL Learners during Lockdown period

The COVID-19 Pandemic changed the entire educational process for distance learning, and most universities in Algeria have shifted to an E-learning platform, marking the first time that EFL students have participated in formal e-learning.

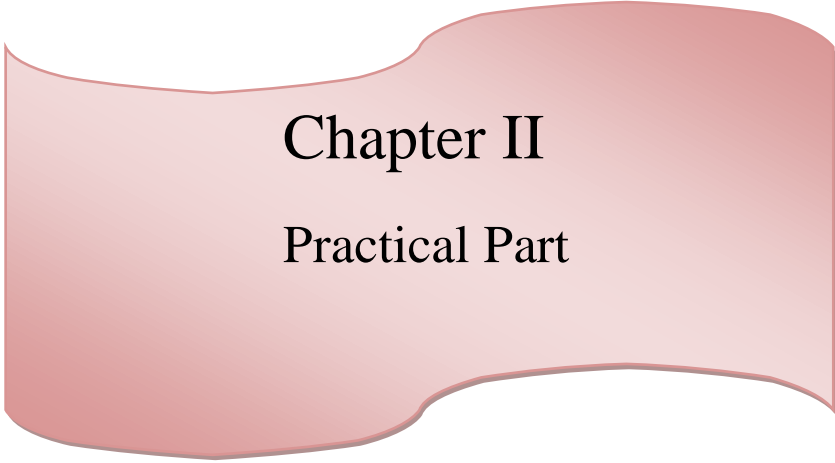
Chapitre 01 : theoretical background

Due to this unexpected change in the higher education system, many challenges and issues have faced EFL learners and teachers during this critical period. Hence, according to previous researchers and to the research study conducted by Tawhida Akhter (2020), the current difficulties can be summarized and addressed as follows. (Retrieved from: <https://rupkatha.com/V12/n5/rioc1s23n5.pdf>).

- Feeling unmotivated is one of the most significant challenges that e-learning users (teachers and learners) face. Absence of motivation will result in a range of difficulties.
- Many online learners lack technical skills, which may make them hesitant to pursue e-learning because they used to face-to-face learning.
- Interaction between teachers and students is lacking, especially in practical courses that are difficult to understand online.
- Many students lack the high bandwidth or reliable internet connection provided by online courses. Some still do not have electronic devices such as computers or Smartphone's.

Conclusion

To conclude, this chapter includes a review of distance learning and online learning in higher education during the pandemic period. It is divided into sections; the first one highlights some distance learning definitions and types, as well as a historical overview of E-learning platform. In other words, Algerian universities used the Moodle E-learning platform as a complement to and help for teaching and learning in order to improve the overall effectiveness of the systems.



Chapter II
Practical Part

The Research Design and Methodology

Introduction

The present study aims at investigating EFL learner's attitude towards online learning during the pandemic lockdown period. In the previous chapter, we have presented a theoretical aspect of the topic under investigation. The present chapter is devoted to the practical part of the research study. Therefore, this chapter deals with the research design and methodology, population and sample, research instruments, data collection procedures, data analysis and description of the results.

Hence, the current chapter consists of two parts to report and highlight the research methodology and data analysis. The first part deals with research design and methodology, meanwhile the second part is concerned with data analysis and discussion of the results, implication, limitation and suggestions for further research of the study.

Chapter 02 : Practical part

Part one: Research design and methodology

1.1 Description of the participants

1.1.1 Population and sample

In the present study, the target population is third year LMD students of the department of English in the University of Bejaia enrolled for the academic year 2021/2022. This population consists of (14) groups, the equivalent of (266).

Our sample includes (54) EFL students. The participants were required to fill in a questionnaire of (11) questions. The current study is based on a quantitative method. Thus, we have selected 3rd year learners because we anticipate that they have already experienced E-learning platform strategy during the COVID-19 pandemic lockdown period in their previous academic year (2019-2020), (2020-2021). Besides, we have selected 3rd learners as a population for our study because we believe they will be able to provide us with vivid and relevant answers to our questions.

1.2 The Instrument

1.2.1 Aim of the questionnaire

The aim of the questionnaire is to know the student's attitude toward online learning during the COVID-19 pandemic quarantine period, and shed lights on the use of E-learning and other digital platforms (Google Meet, Zoom, Facebook.....) by 3rd year students. Furthermore, since students have had online learning experience in the preceding two years, it allows us to acquire relevant information. Moreover, it also reveals students' attitudes and perceptions of online learning throughout this critical period.

1.2.2 Description of students' questionnaire

The questionnaire is divided into three sections. These sections contains (12) questions (open-ended, close and multiple-choice questions). However, the last section is provided as a free space for them to add their opinions, comments and suggestions.

Chapter 02 : Practical part

Section one: General information (Q1-Q3)

The first section is about the background information of the students. The first and second questions are concerned with the age and gender of the students, and the third one seeks the students' evaluation of their English level.

Section two: Learners attitude towards online learning

In this section we have asked one multiple choice question, four close and three open-ended questions. The goal behind these questions is to shed light on the students' attitude towards online learning. In addition to the difficulties they have faced using online learning.

Section three: Further suggestions and comments

This last section is a free space provided to the participants to give and share their opinions, comments and suggestions about the topic under the study.

Conclusion

This section discussed the research design and procedures used to attain the goal of our current study. Hence, we have chosen a questionnaire as technique for gathering necessary data.

Part Two: Data Analysis and Discussion

2.1 Analysis and Discussion of the students' Questionnaire

Section one: General information

This section of the research study deals with the analysis and treatment of the answers collected from 3rd year students'.

Question (1): Students' age

Table 1: Students' gender

Option	Frequency	Percentage
Male	23	42.6%
Female	31	57.4%
Total	54	100%

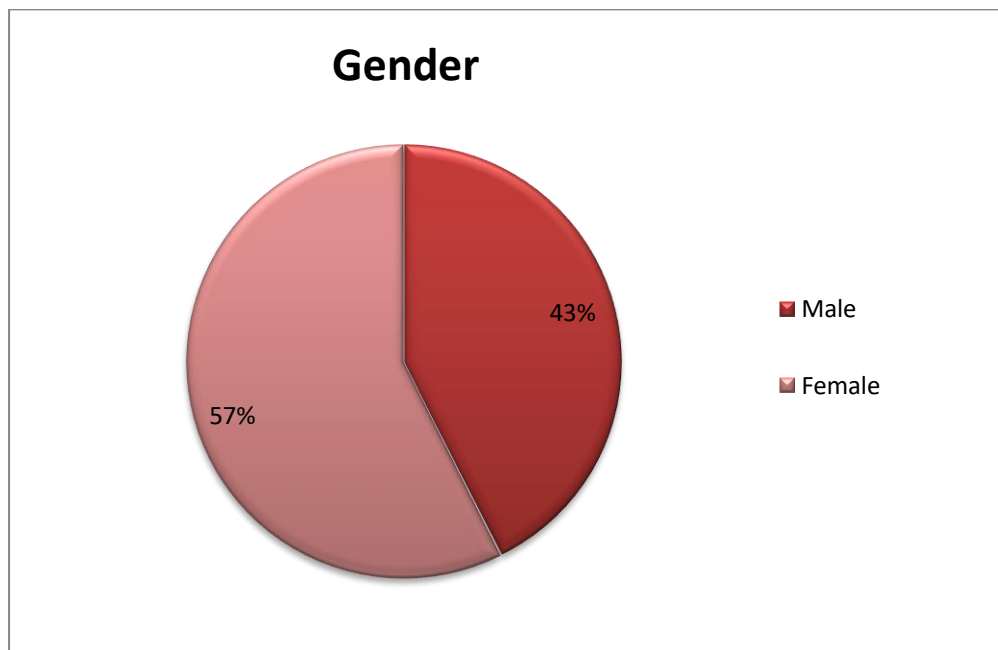


Figure 4: Students' gender

We can notice from table (1) and figure (4) that the majority of the participants are females with a percentage of (57%) while; the remaining percentage of males is (43%).

Chapter 02 : Practical part

Question 2: Students' age

Table 2: Students' age

Option	Frequency	Percentage
18-20 years old	18	33.3%
21-24 years old	27	55%
More than 24 years old	6	16.7%
Total	54	100%

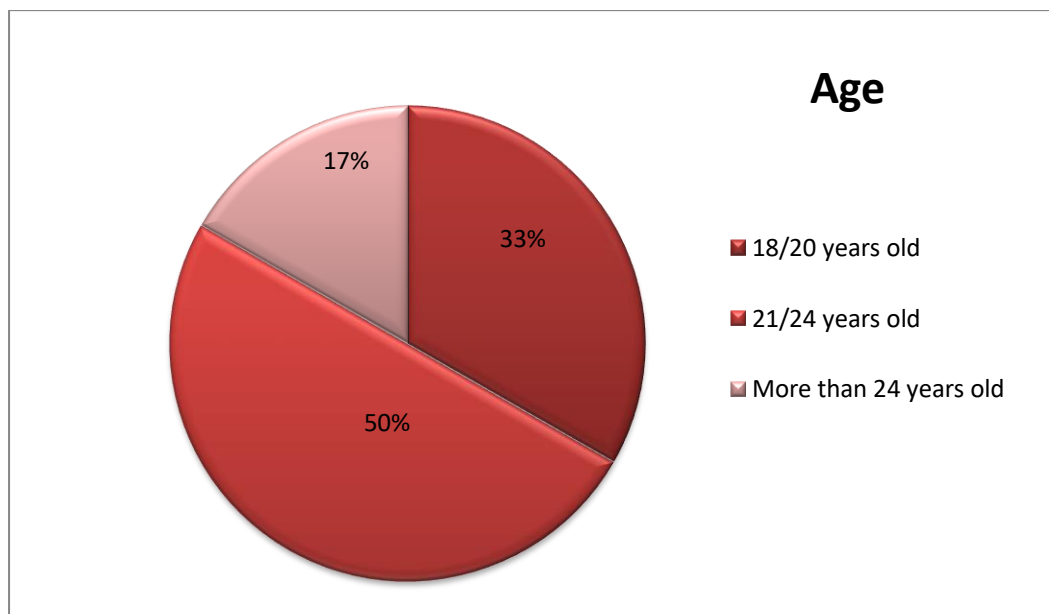


Figure 5: Students' age

Table (2) and figure (5) refer to the age of the students'. We can deduce from it that the age of the participants varies between 18 to 20 years old the equivalent of (33.3%). Then, between 21 to 24 years old the equivalent of (55%) and only (16%) have more than 24 years old.

Chapter 02 : Practical part

Question 3: How do you evaluate your English level?

Table 3: Students' evaluation of their English level

Option	Frequency	Percentage
Low	6	11.1%
Average	14	25.9%
Good	28	51.9%
Very good	6	11.1%
Total	54	100%

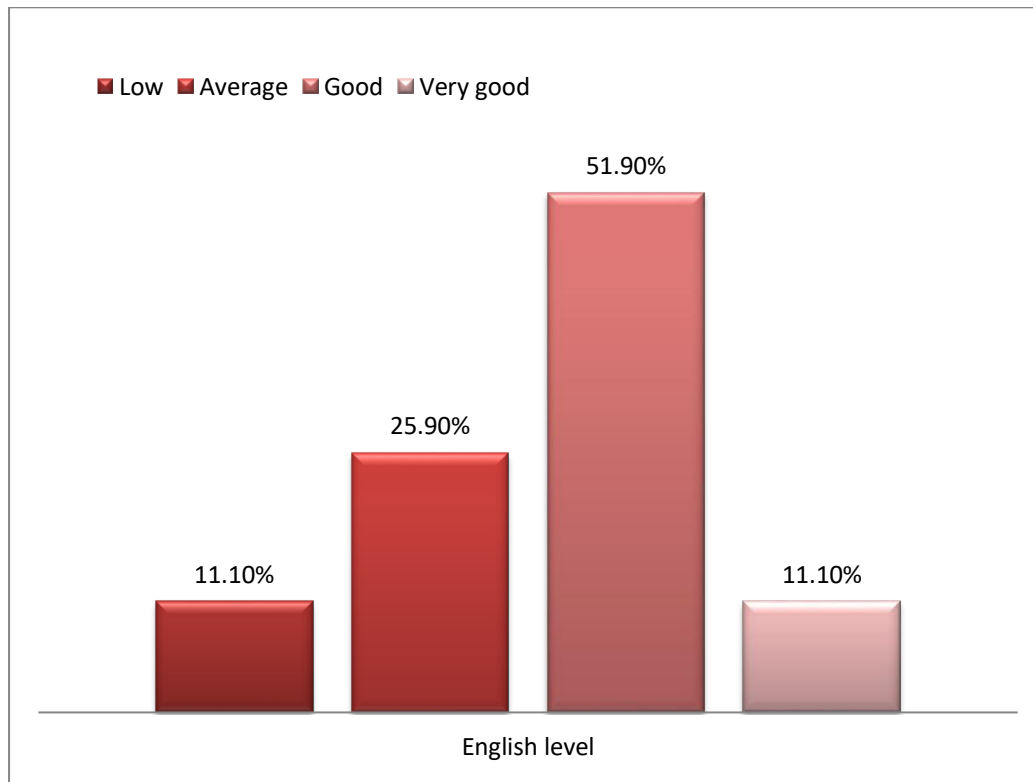


Figure 6: Students' evaluation of their English level

In this table (3) figure (6), (11%) of the participants declare that they have a low level, while (25%) of them consider themselves to have an average level in English. Therefore, (51%) of the students' tend to consider their level in English to be good; while the remaining percentage (11%) refers to the participants who claim to have a very good level in English.

Chapter 02 : Practical part

Section two

Learners' attitude towards online learning

Question 4: What are the digital platforms you have used during the Covid-19 quarantine period?

Table 4: Digital platforms students' have used during Covid-19 quarantine period

Option	Frequency	Percentage
E-learning platform	34	33.7%
Google Meet	9	8.9%
Zoom	7	6.9%
Facebook	23	22.8%
Gmail	26	25.7%
Others	2	2.0%
Total	101	100%

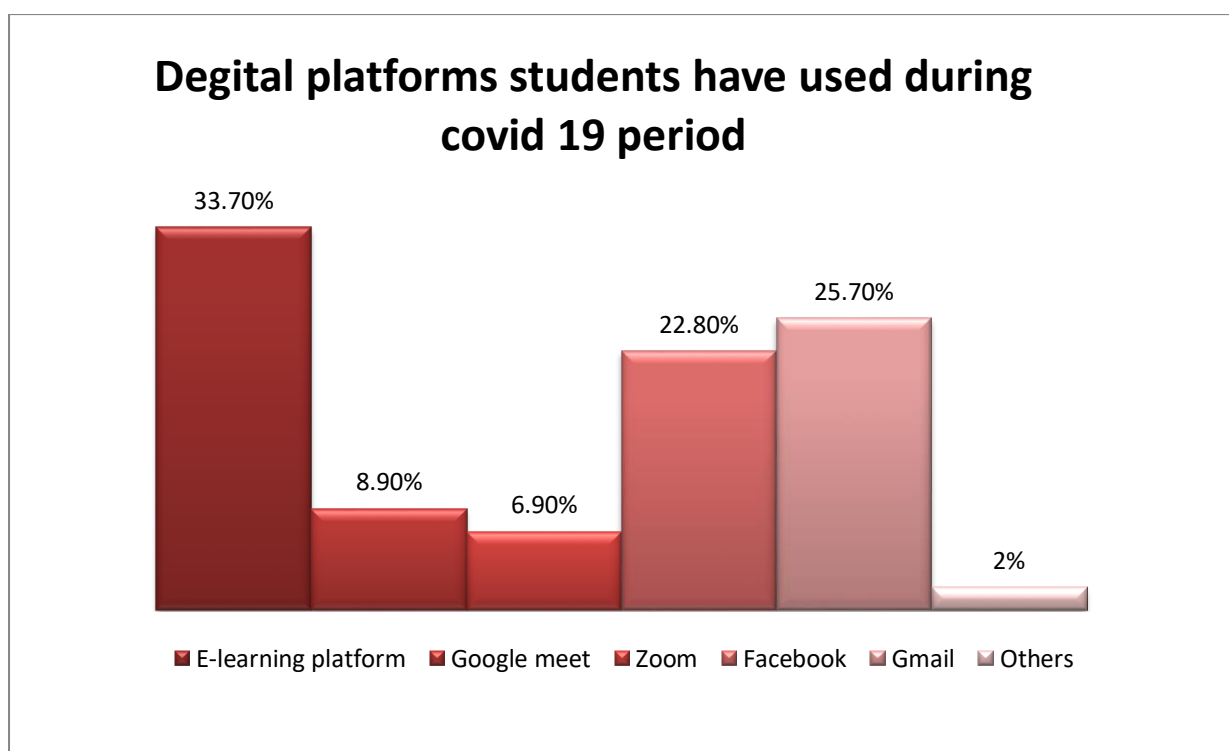


Figure 7: digital platforms students' have used during the Covid-19 quarantine period

Chapter 02 : Practical part

As shown in Table (4) and figure (7), students used a variety of methods to pursue their studies throughout the quarantine period. Hence, the majority of the students used E-learning platform with a percentage of (33.7%). Thus, only (8.9%) of the participants have chosen to utilize Google meet. While, (6.9%) of them opted for Zoom. Meanwhile, (22.8%) of students used Facebook platform and (25.7%) picked out Gmail as an alternative to pursue their learning process. Finally, only (2.0%) of them suggested another platform which is Instagram.

Question 5: How do you evaluate E-learning platform?

Table (5): Students' evaluation of E-learning platform

Option	Frequency	Percentage
Excellent	5	9.2%
Good	31	57.4%
Not Good	17	31.5%
No idea	1	1.9%
Total	54	100%

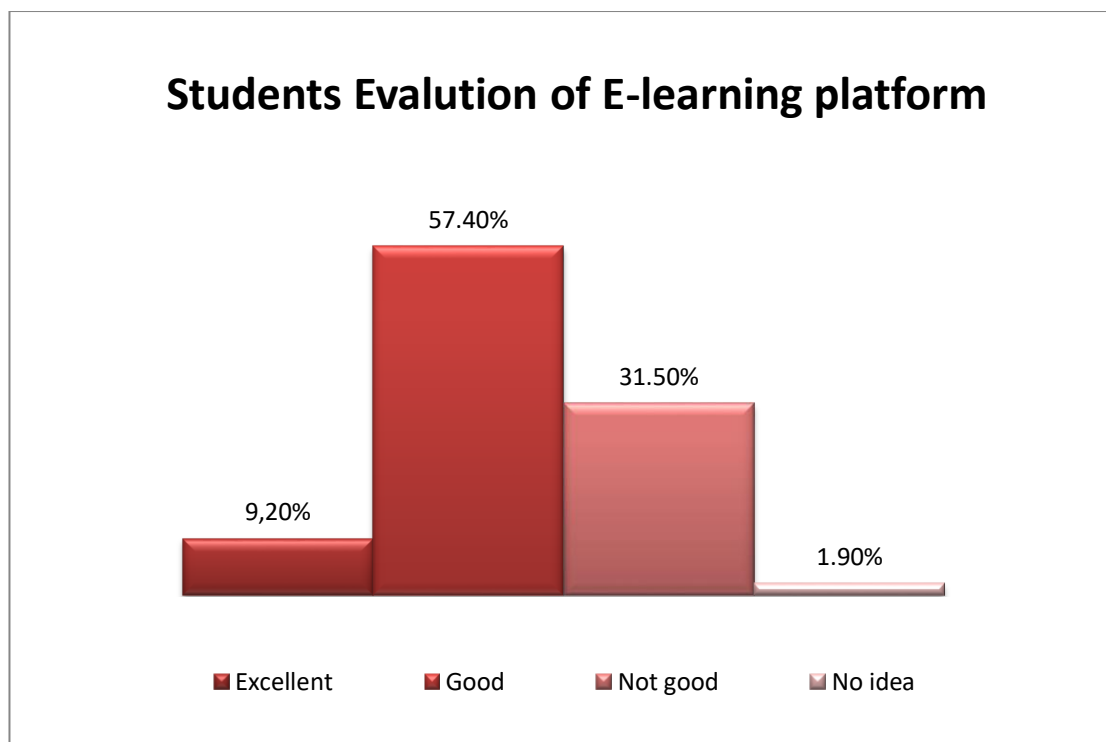


Figure (8): Students' evaluation of E-learning platform

Chapter 02 : Practical part

This table (5) and figure (8) reveal that (9.2 %) of the participants gave an excellent review of the E-Learning platform, while (56.4%) considered it good. As a result, (31.51%) of students think that the E-Learning platform is not good. Meanwhile, (1.9%) of learners has no idea about the platform.

Question 6: Have you faced any difficulties while using online learning?

Table 6: Whether students perception of online learning

Option	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	29	53.7%
No	25	46.3%
Total	54	100%

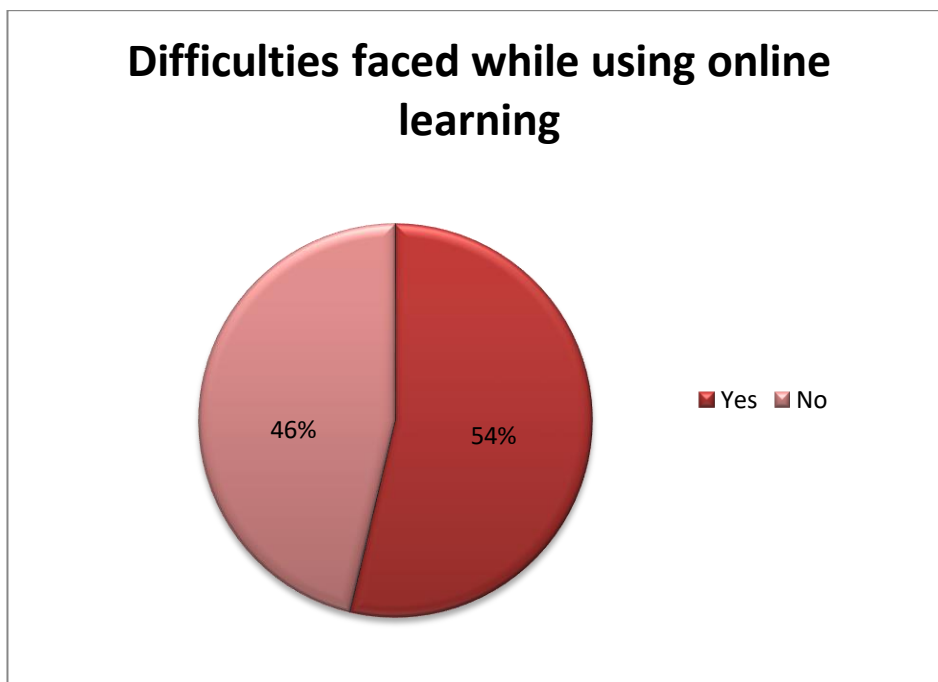


Figure 9: Whether students' perception of online learning

The statistics shown in both table (6) and figure (9) above demonstrate that the majority of the students (53.7%) experience difficulties when using online learning. However, 46.34% of the students think that they could readily use online learning. As a result of this finding, we

Chapter 02 : Practical part

might deduce that most third-year students face challenges while using online learning. Their justifications were as follows:

- ✓ Quality of the network (poor connection, server error).
- ✓ Access issues to the E-learning platform (technical problems, password forgotten).
- ✓ Facing difficulties understanding posted lectures (courses without explanation).
- ✓ Lack of communication and contact with teachers.

Question 7: Do you think that online courses increase your English level?

Table 7: Whether online courses increase students' English level

Option	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	16	29.6%
No	38	70.4%
Total	54	100%

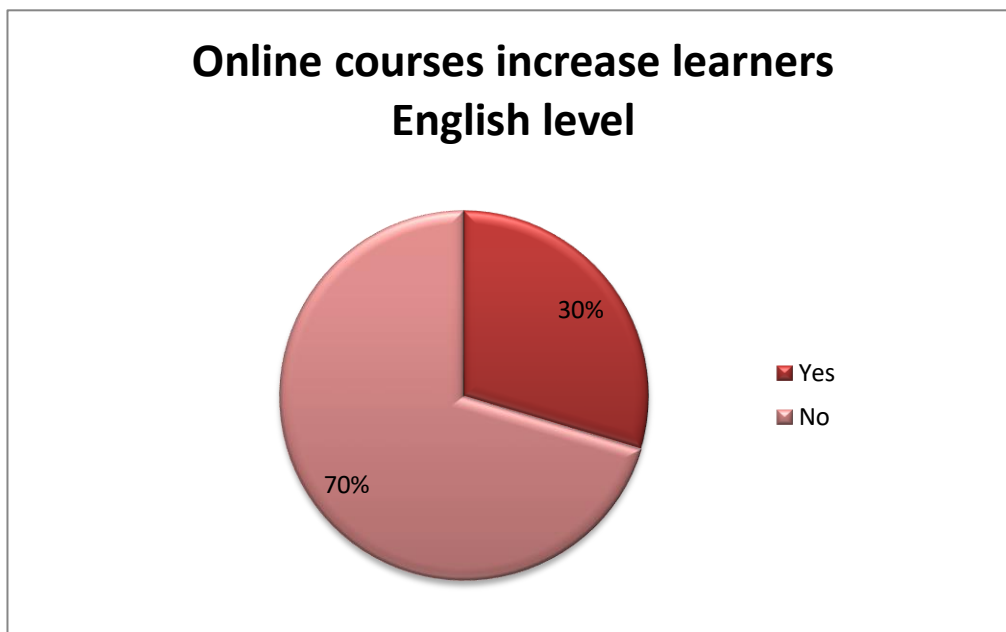


Figure 10: Whether online courses increase students' English level

Chapter 02 : Practical part

According to table (7) and figure (10), (29.6%) of the participants agree that online courses increase their English level. while the majority (70.4%) believes online courses did not help them to improve their English.

Question 8: Does lack of interaction and communication with teachers affects your learning process?

Table 8: Whether lack of interaction and communication with teachers affects students learning process

Option	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	41	75.9%
No	13	24.1%
Total	54	100%

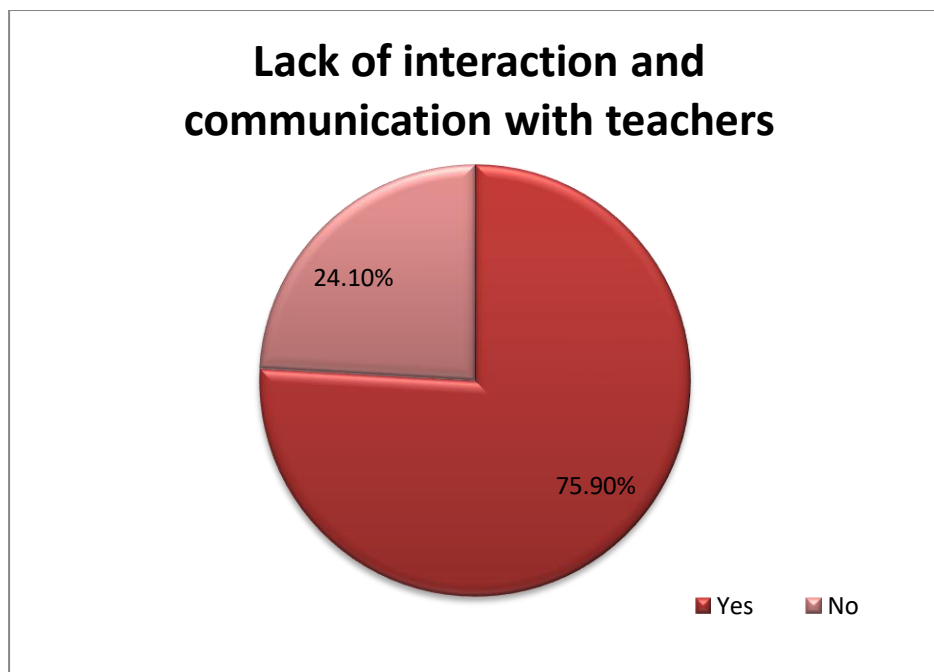


Figure 11: Whether lack of interaction and communication with teachers affects students learning process.

Including this table (8) and figure (11), (75.9%) of students indicated that a lack of interaction and communication with teachers has negatively affected their learning. In contrast, (24.1%) of them disapprove of that.

Chapter 02 : Practical part

Question 9: Do you feel motivated and comfortable during online learning?

Table 9: Whether students feel motivated and comfortable during online learning

Option	Frecuency	Percentage
Yes	19	35.2%
No	35	64.8%
Total	54	100%

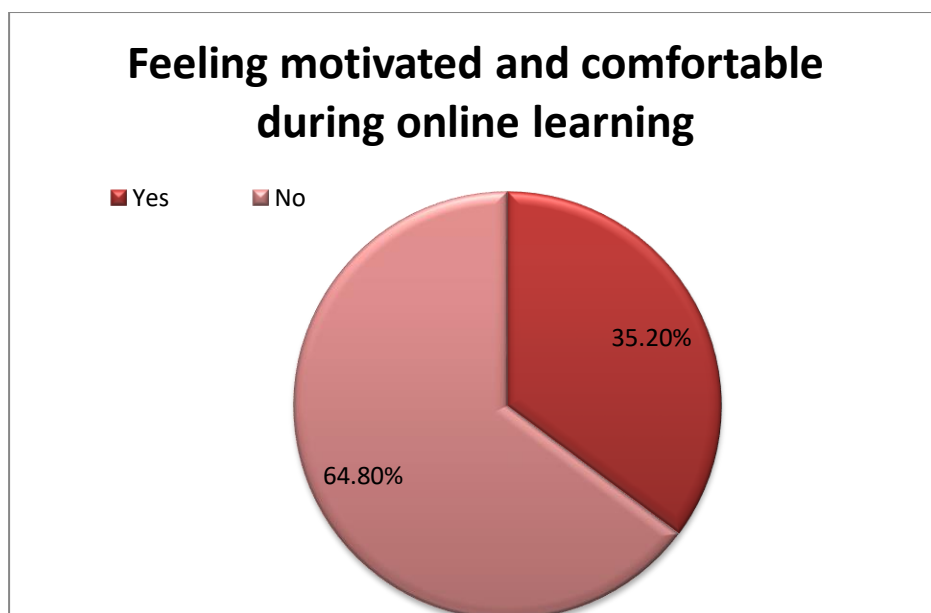


Figure 12: Whether students feel motivated and comfortable during online learning

The table (9) and figure (12), (35.2%) of the students feel motivated and at ease while learning online. Nevertheless, (64.8%) of them do not believe that motivation occurs.

The research reveals that participants' motivation was relatively low in online learning when compared to traditional learning (face-to-face), this attribute to a lack of interaction and communication with teachers in online courses.

Chapter 02 : Practical part

Question 10: Do you prefer traditional learning (face-to-face), online learning or both?

Table 10: Students' preference: Traditional learning, online learning or both

Option	Frequency	Percentage
Traditional learning	28	51,9%
Online Learning	8	14.8%
Both	18	33.3%
Total	54	100%

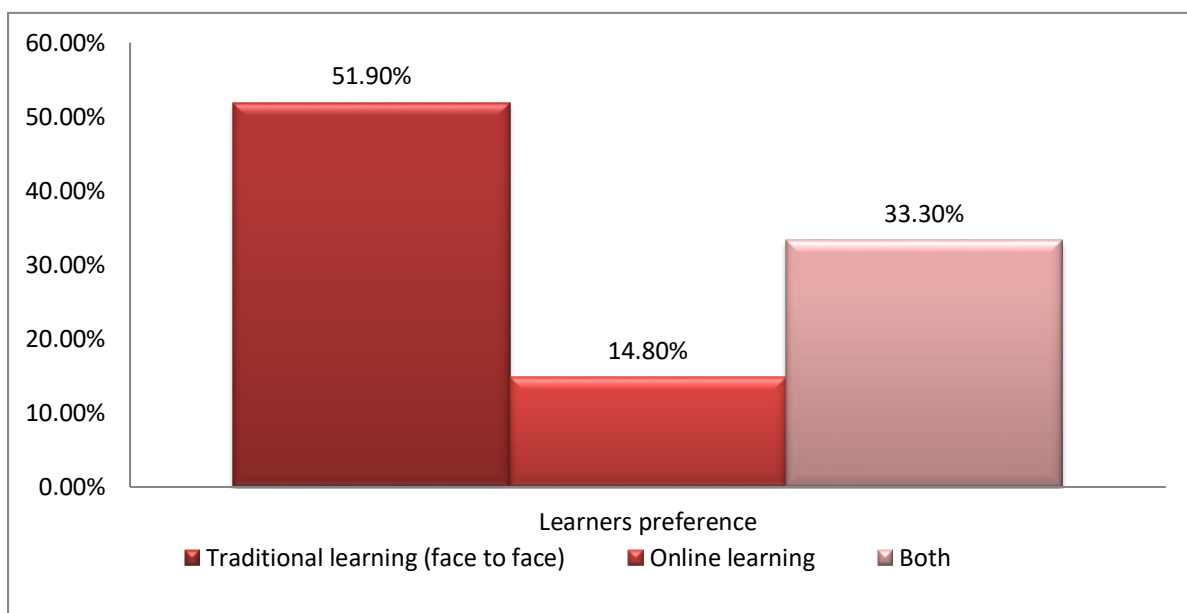


Figure 13: Students' preference: Traditional learning, online learning or both

As stated in table (10) and figure (13), students picked a variety of replies when asked if they preferred traditional learning, online learning, or both. Traditional learning was preferred by (51.9%), while online learning was chosen by (14.8%) of the students. Finally, (33.3%) preferred combining both traditional and online learning and their justifications were as follow:

❖ **Traditional learning (face-to-face)**

- Direct interaction and communication with teachers and classmates.
- More effective than online learning.
- Better understanding of the lessons.

Chapter 02 : Practical part

- Practical experience is important to increase learners' English level.
- Feel motivated and enjoy learning.
- Best method of learning and teaching.

❖ Online learning

- Online learning provides students with complete control over their learning courses.
- The ability to work at their own speed.
- Online learning allows quiet and shy learners to express their thoughts and ideas.
- More free time and less courses.

❖ Both

- Both online and traditional learning necessitate a significant level of work.
- Traditional learning is important to have direct feedback, while online learning helps adapt and enhance their capabilities of technology.

Question 11: Do think that there is more academic cheating and plagiarism in online learning?

Table 11: Academic cheating and plagiarism in online learning

Option	Frecuency	Percentage
Yes	41	75.9%
No	13	24.1%
Total	54	100%

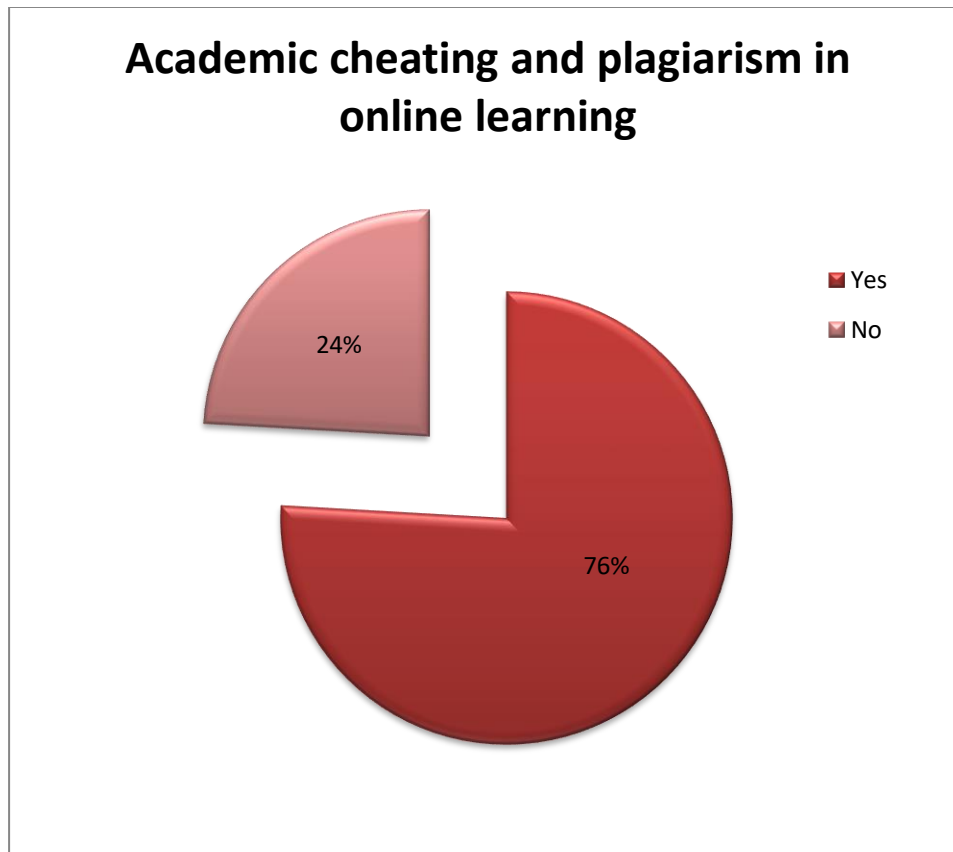


Figure 14: Academic cheating and plagiarism in online learning

According to the final table (11) and figure (14), the majority of participants (75.9%) believe academic cheating and plagiarism are more prevalent in online learning. However, (24.1%) of them disagreed with that statement. Students' justifications were as follow:

- Learners tend to look for answers on the internet whenever they have the chance.
- It is easy to cheat because they are unguarded.
- Get information easily without making any effort.
- Teachers don't check plagiarism
- Most students have access to internet.
- Online learning increases cheating and plagiarism.
- They pick answers from Google and YouTube for their exams to get a good mark.
- Ask their friends for help with their homework or exams.

Chapter 02 : Practical part

As we can notice from the students' justification, most of them admitted that they cheat and use the internet and different websites and platforms such as Google, YouTube, and Facebook group chats. Hence, they said that this affects their learning process negatively.

Section three: Implications and recommendations for further Researchers

The following points represent some of the comments and suggestions made by students regarding our research topic:

- Interesting topic. Online learning had a great impact on the learning and teaching process during the COVID-19 quarantine period.
- Online learning does not provide learners and teachers with practical work and communication experience; it values students' assessment in lower signification.
- In a traditional classroom, students can easily express their opinions and give their own questions to the teacher, likely to result in immediate answers to their questions.
- Traditional learning is preferable and efficient for achieving a successful learning process.
- Enhance and increase the availability and quality of online learning in Algeria.
- Both traditional and online learning are very important and beneficial to students in the circumstance of a pandemic in the future.

In this last section of the questionnaire, students were asked to give their point of view in relation to this topic. Few of the participants answer the question; many students consider online learning to be less efficient than regular face-to-face learning in a class environment at university. Hence, it is not only because online courses are less effective, but students also lack access to the necessary technological devices and tools. Furthermore, they believe that traditional learning is an important component of teaching and learning.

2.2 Discussion and Analysis of the result

This section is devoted to the discussion of the results collected from the data collection tool, namely the students' questionnaire. The current study explored EFL learners' attitudes towards online learning during the Covid-19 pandemic lockdown period by using different electronic devices and platforms. The findings from the preceding section and the

Chapter 02 : Practical part

interpretation of our research results permitted us to respond to our research questions, which served as guidance for our exploratory research work.

According to the outcomes of the student questionnaire analysis, we believe that most third-year LMD students' attitudes toward online learning are relatively negative.

The findings of question (06) reveal that (53.7%) of students face numerous difficulties and obstacles while using online learning, such as network issues, accessibility, experience and material. As a result, many participants argue that this increases the difficulty of online courses and the use of online teaching through utilizing different online platforms. Thus, these difficulties may have a negative impact on students, causing the abandonment of their studies (Li, C. Lalani, F. 2020).

As noticed in the previous result section above, the outcomes of question (08) demonstrate that (75.9%) of the participants confess that they struggle in online courses when it comes to communicating with their teachers. They are accustomed to having direct contact with their teachers to provide guidance, orientation, immediate feedback, and to interact with their classmates. In addition, learners show less interest, do not feel motivated, and this method does not help to increase their English level. As a result, the finding of question (07) indicates that (70.4%) approves this statement. Therefore, to counter students' challenges, online courses must focus on effective communication between the teachers and students through real-time interaction to prevent a sense of isolation during the learning and teaching process. As a consequence, their communicative abilities in language class will be enhanced (Saeed, A. Congman, R 2013).

All in all, survey participants indicate that students' attitudes are partly negative. Hence, online courses may cause them to be anxious about completing tasks within the time constraints and may cause them to face challenges. Despite the fact that this sanitary crisis has various disadvantages and has a significant impact on the education system, this experience will push the ministry of higher education and scientific research of Algeria to enhance the connection quality and provide students with necessary technological materials to be prepared for any future outbreak and for better application of online learning.

Chapter 02 : Practical part

2.3 Limitation of the study

Our present research is limited to EFL learners' attitudes towards online learning during the lockdown period of the department of English at Bejaia University. Due to the wave system, our research study dealt with a limited population, which consisted of only (54) students. Another point of concern that could limit the authenticity of our findings is the amount of time spent collecting the required data. The data for this study was gathered in a limited time period (in the second semester of the academic year).

As a result, the study should be conducted over a longer period of time to investigate English-speaking learners' attitudes toward online learning during the COVID-19 quarantine period.

2.4 Suggestions for Further research

Since this study focuses on EFL learners' attitudes towards online learning during Covid-19 lockdown period, further studies are needed to investigate the effects and the solution to enhance the quality of online learning in higher education.

Moreover, for our data collection tool we used EFL students' questionnaire; therefore future studies could add teachers' to provide more explanations and clarification on the topic under investigation.

Chapter 02 : Practical part

Conclusion

This chapter tackled the current investigation final result; it has revealed that EFL learners' attitudes toward online learning are negative. This state of fact is not only due to a lack of effectiveness of online learning, but also to the numerous technical challenges it faces. It can be stated that electronic platforms such as E-Learning based on distance learning as a complement to traditional (face-to-face) teaching and learning must be attentively designed, and teachers should be motivated to encourage and help students use classes more effectively.

General conclusion

General Conclusion

The Algerian higher education sector has radically changed since the outbreak of the Corona-virus pandemic. Thus, several technological measures and strategies, including different digital platforms; E-learning, Moodle, Zoom, Gmail, Facebook, and Messenger, have been implemented as an urged solution to peruse the teaching and learning processes. In addition, these circumstances pushed both teachers and learners to embrace a new Internet-based device, which is E-learning platform.

This study looks into EFL learners' attitude towards online learning quarantine period. The current research started with a question about students' attitude, how they communicate with their teachers and the obstacles they have faced during this critical situation.

This study provided to answers our research question, It has been found that EFL students' hold a negative attitude towards distance learning. Therefore, the most prevalent problems uncovered are lack of communication and interaction between teachers and learners.

To conclude, the current situation has made online teaching and learning an essential matter for the higher education sector. It is actually in response to the need for a system that combines technology and reinforces flexibility in the learning environment in order to accomplish educational efficiency and enhance university achievements.

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Appendix

Students' questionnaire

University of Bejaia Department of English

This questionnaire is designed to ask students of 3rd year at the department of English, University of Bejaia (2022).

The present questionnaire tackles learners' attitude towards online learning during the pandemic lockdown period. We would be grateful if you could answer the following questions.

Please put a cross in the appropriate box, and justify if it is necessary.

Section one: General information

1- Gender

- a- Male
- b- Female

2- Your age

- a- 18 – 20 years old
- b- 21 – 24 years old
- c- More than 24 years old

3- How do you evaluate your English level?

- a- Low
- b- Average
- c- Good
- d- Very good

Section two: Learners attitude towards online learning

1-What are the digital platforms you have used during the Covid-19 quarantine period?

- a- E-learning platform (Moodle)
 - b- Google Meet
 - c- Zoom
 - d- Facebook
 - e- Gmail
 - f- Others.....
-

2- How do you evaluate e-learning platform?

- a- Excellent
- b- Good
- c- Not good
- d- No idea

3- Have you faced any difficulties while using online learning?

- a- Yes
- b- No

If yes, what kind of difficulties you have faced?

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4- Do you think that online courses increase your English level?

- a- Yes
- b- No

5- Does lack of interaction and communication with teachers affects your learning process?

- a- Yes
- b- No

6- Do you feel motivated and comfortable during online learning?

- a- Yes
- b- No

7- Do you prefer?

- a- Traditional learning (face to face)
- b- Online learning
- c- Both

Justify your answer

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8- Do you think that there is more academic cheating and plagiarism in online learning?

- a- Yes
- b- No

Justify your answer

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Section Three:

This space is provided for you to add any suggestions or comments concerning the topic underresearch

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**Thank you for your participation
Good luck for your exam**

