The Challenges and Opportunities of Teaching English Worldwide in the COVID-19 Pandemic

The Challenges and Opportunities of Teaching English Worldwide in the COVID-19 Pandemic

Edited by

Ferit Kılıçkaya, Joanna Kic-Drgas
and Rachel Nahlen

The Challenges and Opportunities of Teaching English Worldwide
in the COVID-19 Pandemic

Edited by Ferit Kılıçkaya, Joanna Kic-Drgas and Rachel Nahlen

This book first published 2022

Cambridge Scholars Publishing

Lady Stephenson Library, Newcastle upon Tyne, NE6 2PA, UK

British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data
A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION

FERIT KILIÇKAYA, JOANNA KIC-DRGAS, RACHEL NAHLEN

The unexpected pandemic outbreak has changed the previously established traditional shape of education and shaken up stable patterns of learning and teaching. According to the latest data from the World Bank, since the start of the coronavirus pandemic, more than 180 countries have decided to close schools and switch to remote or hybrid learning. This has resulted in more than 1.6 billion children having to manage their school responsibilities independently at home in front of computer screens or tablets if they have access to them at all[1].

The following situation has not only changed the accessibility of learning by introducing distance learning solutions but has also affected the teacher-student relationship. The main challenges were connected with the shift to digital technologies and an overwhelming feeling of isolation.

Pupils struggle with a lack of motivation to learn, low productivity, the problem of skipping classes, or huge backlogs of work (Allo, 2020; Coman et al., 2020). For the vast majority of teachers, remote education is a great challenge, forcing them to deal with a variety of problems daily: from technological limitations, through communication problems within the school, between parents and school, or between parents and pupils, to psychological problems (Howard et al., 2021).

Very little research has been devoted to exploring teachers' readiness to shift their teaching from face-to-face to fully online in response to the Covid-19 pandemic (Howard et al., 2021). The main observations were the following: the short timeframe for the transition to online teaching and learning resulted in limited time for teachers to properly prepare for this

---

[1] https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2020/04/coronavirus-education-global-covid19-online-digital-learning/, 12.09.2021

shift. Therefore, their institutions had an important responsibility to provide support and common guidelines regarding the institution's expectations for online learning and teaching, to compensate for differences in individual teachers' levels of readiness.

In the context of education, the pandemic has also brought to the fore remarkable differences between students in a better financial situation and those who could not afford computer equipment or the Internet. Many pupils simply could not attend classes for this reason. Teachers also struggled with the lack of equipment, as they were left in many situations without institutional support.

The need to get out of the school routine to look at the way they conduct their lessons from a new perspective was essential for many teachers. In a remote education environment, the traditional "delivery method", namely walking up to the blackboard and working with a textbook, no longer works. Instead, it was necessary to look for methods that would better activate students to work on their own.

Nevertheless, pandemic-driven changes also entailed "opportunities to reshape education, teacher education, and educational institutions' (Flores, 2020). Instructors, teachers, educators needed to adjust to remote teaching within a very short time. Although Wheeler (2001) predicted that e-learning will be the biggest benefit for education, for many teachers it involved enormous stress and isolation when having to independently manage unknown digital tools. However, at the same time, it accelerated the digitalization of the teaching setting, which was the aim of many educational institutions (U.S. Department of Education, 2017). An additional argument highlighting the significance of a current transformation is a shortage of teacher workforce, which has become even more serious after many teachers decided to retire early due to the pandemic threat (Randstad, 2020).

The following collection of narratives attempts to describe selected aspects of the new educational context related to the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic. This context is in constant transformation, which makes any attempt to describe it all the more difficult. The transformations that have taken place in distance learning over the past year alone will leave their mark, especially on student-teacher relationships and approaches to teaching.

This book has been developed in response to the need to share experiences between teachers living in different countries and therefore working in different educational contexts. It contains 33 narratives written in English

by teachers coming from 17 countries (Algeria, Brazil, China, England, France, Hungary, Iran, Italy, Malaysia, Nigeria, Poland, Qatar, Russia, Thailand, Turkey, Vietnam, Switzerland). This multicultural context offers a deeper insight into the challenges and opportunities teachers worldwide faced in confrontation with the pandemic.

All narratives have been written based on teachers' own experiences teaching at different stages of education (primary school, high school, university). Their uniqueness lies in the fact that they include descriptions of their own, often very creative solutions to problems related to remote learning, as well as drawing attention to the opportunities that have opened up in teaching thanks to the intensive digitalisation of methods and tools.

All chapters included in this collection are arranged alphabetically according to the country of the authors. All narratives also follow the same structure: a brief description of the context, resources available, challenges, issues faced while teaching English online, teachers' own solutions to these issues, and opportunities and benefits of teaching online.

The editors and the authors hope that the material collected in this book will not only be an interesting record of the experiences and reflections of teachers from all over the world, but also a source of inspiration for many others confronted with similar problems during a pandemic.

Poznań and California, 2021
Editors

References

Allo, M. D. G. (2020). Is the online learning good in the midst of Covid-19 Pandemic? The case of EFL learners. *Sinestesia, 10*(1), 1–10. https://doi.org/10.33394/jo-elt.v8i1.3783

Coman, C., Laurentiu G., Meseșan-Schmitz, L. Stanciu, C., & Buluraca, M. C. (2020). Online teaching and learning in higher education during the Coronavirus pandemic: Students' perspective. *Sustainability, 12*(24), 10367. https://doi.org/10.3390/su122410367

Flores, M. A. 2020. Preparing teachers to teach in complex settings: Opportunities for professional learning and development. *European Journal of Teacher Education, 43*(3), 297–300. https://doi.org/10.1080/02619768.2020.1771895

Randstad. (2020). Teacher shortages grow worldwide. https://www.randstad.com/workforce-insights/future-work/teacher-shortages-grow-worldwide/

U.S. Department of Education, Office of Educational Technology. 2017. Reimagining the role of technology in education: 2017 National education technology plan update. *U.S. Department of Education*, May 8. https://tech.ed.gov/files/2017/01/NETP17.pdf

Wheeler, S. (2001). Information and communication Technologies and the changing role of the teacher, *Journal of Educational Media, 26*(1), 7–17. https://doi.org/10.1080/1358165010260102

CHAPTER 1

ENHANCING THE QUALITY OF TEACHING AND ASSESSMENT: TEACHING ENGLISH IN ALGERIA

ABDERRAHIM BOUDERBANE

Description of the context

The teaching of English as a foreign language in Algeria was based primarily on the grammar-translation method and audio-lingual method. Algeria is a French-colonized country and French was set by language planners as a second language, and it dominates all types of administrative, commercial, and political domains. However, in the first decade of the 21st century, the Algerian government realized the importance of English at the international level, especially in the context of globalization and openness to foreign trade and investment. Therefore, the Ministry of Higher Education assigned compulsory English courses to students at the Bachelor, Master, and even Doctorate level. Meanwhile, the syllabus of English major students has been changed with the adoption of the new educational system in higher education, called LMD (Bachelor, Master, and Doctorate).

Like any other university in Algeria, some subjects were added for bachelor degree students at Abdelhafid Boussouf University Centre to teach English as an international language and increase knowledge of English for Academic Purposes (ESP). For first-and second-year students, subjects vary from Oral Expression, Written Expression, Grammar, Linguistics to Phonetics. These subjects are all about language knowledge. There are two more subjects which are Human and Social Sciences and Learning Methods. The former (known as SHS) provides students with minimum knowledge in academic English in the field of sociology,

history, anthropology, and ethnography. The latter is a study-skills subject since it was added only to help students study other subjects using their own learning styles and different learning techniques. Third-year students study ESP (English for Specific Purposes), which offers bachelor degree students minimum knowledge of varieties of English in different domains. The fact is that this subject prepares students to cope with English outside academic contexts because they are expected to start working in different fields, and hence they need a more specific lexicon in scientific, economic, commercial, and business domains. The subjects SHS and ESP are taught according to genre-specific approaches, which means teaching based on introducing different text typologies in terms of words as expressed in scientific notions, rhetorical functions, cohesive devices, and text structures.

Available resources

After an unexpected outbreak of the coronavirus pandemic, most teachers at the university centre of Mila owned limited resources to start distance learning. Teachers used two types of online platforms provided by the university, which are Moodle and Google Meet. Moodle was introduced four years ago, and most teachers are familiar with it. However, before the pandemic students did not engage in any activities on Moodle except when downloading courses, and handouts from teachers.

At first, the main aim of Moodle was to upload lessons in the form of PDF and DOC files for students in all subjects. Meanwhile, during the coronavirus pandemic, the Department of English at Mila University Centre created accounts for all students automatically, where students can log on using their ID card numbers and family names. This time students needed to accomplish a number of other tasks on Moodle, such as uploading online assignments, answering online questions, evaluating sources, and even taking online tests and exams. It was a completely new experience for students. In addition, online teaching took place on Google Meet. The department scheduled lessons of difficult subjects only to summarize the content in classes lasting about an hour. Most were scheduled in the morning twice a week for each subject. Teachers in the department opened a Facebook group and invited their students to join. This group allowed students to stay up to date when schedules were adjusted and kept students informed about new lectures, home assignments, as well as dates and timing of tests and exams. In this group, students can contact their teachers directly, discuss problems and even suggest timing for classes. Students also discuss difficulties of online

teaching and learning and complain about internet connection disruption during online tests and exams. The Facebook group is seen as pedagogical support for students in online teaching.

Typical lesson

Most classes taken online for Bachelor students were scheduled in the morning for about an hour per class. The classes were all lectures in different subjects including linguistics, phonetics, civilization, ESP, literature, social sciences, and psychology. However, some subjects were ignored since before the pandemic they were taken as tutorials, and therefore, the department asked teachers to provide students with ready-made handouts on the Moodle platform. Teachers consolidated the tutorial through tasks provided after each lecture and some of the tasks were marked as parts of continuous assessment. The teacher presented ESP lectures using a traditional method by dividing the lecture into two phases. The lecture started with a warm-up to prepare students psychologically for taking in knowledge. For that purpose, the teacher started lessons with questions about previous lectures and general questions. This phase aimed to refresh students' memories and synthesize information in the form of top-down processes in an attempt to build up new knowledge. In the presentation phase, the teacher summarized the main points and devoted about ten to fifteen minutes to discussions, comments, or any other additional information. Generally speaking, the teacher presented the main points on Moodle and asked the students to prepare them before the lecture.

It is a good way to motivate students to attend lectures, raise their awareness of preparation, participation, and a serious approach. Importantly, these aspects of classroom interaction (preparation, participation, and seriousness) are the basic elements of face-to-face teaching. After preparation and presentation, the teacher consolidated the material for students with different tasks to be done after the lecture. Therefore, most of the classroom interaction took place on Moodle through lecture preparation and tasks. If students did not understand something in the lecture, or if they needed more instructions about the tasks, they could leave questions for the teacher in the chat option on Moodle or the Facebook page, and the teacher could respond to it anytime.

Challenges/issues faced while teaching online

Despite having many technical problems, such as internet disruptions, lack of resources, and the unpreparedness of the University for this wholly new situation, teachers considered pedagogical issues as more challenging because they created problems for both teachers and students at all levels. The time constraint on lectures imposed by the Department of Foreign Languages was a real challenge for both teachers and students. Introducing lectures lasting one hour, or even one hour and a half on online platforms was challenging because logging on and waiting for students took time. Unlike in face-to-face teaching, the teacher wasted a lot of time waiting for students to log on and connect to Google Meet. Therefore, the teacher had to remove some important points from the lecture, and sometimes omitted the warm-up and moved directly to the presentation phase. Meanwhile, students also complained about time for both lectures and classroom interaction when the teacher skipped opening up the lines of communication with them, as they liked being active learners and they called for more interaction time rather than being passive learners in one-way lectures. In addition, the nature of online lectures as it is assimilated to face-to-face teaching made online teaching difficult.

Despite having a lot of options, teachers were not trained enough to present lessons using a variety of multimedia techniques. As it is integral to the teaching of ESP, text analysis (in terms of rhetorical functions, notions, and cohesive devices) is a compulsory course to show students different varieties of texts; however, the use of different multimedia techniques, such as data presentations, videos, and sounds is important too. The teacher and students expected online teaching to be different in terms of teaching materials, teaching techniques, and even learning strategies. However, teachers do not have the necessary knowledge and skills to prepare and deliver lessons online, especially with sound effects, video projecting, and subtitling. Most teachers at the Department of English considered preparing lectures online with high tech options as time-consuming and advanced proficiency computer skills were highly required here to help properly accomplish the task. Therefore, the lack of training and unpreparedness negatively affected the presentation of online lessons.

Solutions

As it has been mentioned before, since time was a constraint, the teacher omitted some phases in lectures and presented them centrally. However,

the teacher added another lecture at the end of each unit to wrap up the whole unit and open up the lines of classroom interaction between students and the teacher. In this additional lecture, students could refer back to all previous lectures with questions and gain additional information.

They could also discuss assessment procedures for both continuous assessment and final examination. In addition, to solve the timing problem the teacher announced an earlier timing for the lecture on the Facebook page, that is he announced the timing of a lecture which was half an hour or twenty minutes before the actual start of the lecture. The aim was to give students more time to log on and save time for the actual lecture. The Moodle platform contains a lot of options, such as adding links to websites, joining different files, and sending or receiving messages. Hence, the teacher improvised using the options of Google Meet and Moodle to create integration between teaching and assessment. The teacher prepared and adopted data presentations of some difficult research aspects and phenomena taken from texts with simplified English words. The teacher also sent links on the Moodle platform to YouTube videos and websites, which were teaching materials related directly to lectures. Accordingly, Google Meet was used mainly for the presentation of lectures using data presentations and video interaction. The variety of options on Moodle helped to achieve the consolidation phase of teaching through tasks and assessment. The teacher relied on task design and task implementation options to send tasks after each lecture, chat with students about the task, give instructions, and upload handouts. Students were evaluated weekly as distance learning involved ongoing monitoring, consolidation, and evaluation. Lack of classroom interaction during lectures is compensated by continuous assignment and assessment of tasks. Meanwhile, links to videos and other teaching materials were sent to help students understand difficult notions and operations in scientific texts.

Opportunities/benefits of online teaching

Online teaching takes time and requires a lot of practice. Thanks to online teaching, both synchronous and asynchronous learning is activated. Students are kept busy sometimes waiting for the timing of lectures to be announced, and other times for lectures and tasks to be uploaded on the platform. Online teaching has made students aware of self-monitoring and self-evaluation techniques to monitor the learning process throughout the whole semester.

Students learn to adapt to new learning situations, and in this way create new learning techniques and methods in this virtual learning environment. As regards the presentation of lectures, the teacher customizes lectures according to the needs of students. Since time is a constraint, teaching is flexible and phases can be removed, delayed, and postponed. In addition, the teacher can update information, adjust the content of lessons and programmes to meet the needs of students. The teacher explains only what is important in the lectures and skips unnecessary details and examples as they can be used as a consolidation and assessment.

The teacher's role changes in online teaching from a guide and controller to participant in lectures with students, to provider and even technical problem solver. The virtual classroom is an extraordinary learning environment. First, it is not costly because it does not require any fancy tables, chairs, classrooms, or boards. The main requirements of a virtual classroom are an internet connection and electronic devices (PC, laptop, and smart phones). Despite some disadvantages, online teaching is a blessing because there are so many options that teachers can utilize when they plan and present lectures. With just a simple operation, teachers can invite students to lectures, upload handouts, and evaluate them online. Teachers improvise in online teaching by sharing links and videos, recording lectures for absent students, creating a YouTube channel, and engaging in conversations with students within different kinds of social networking communities. Assessment is achieved daily and tasks are rather student-oriented to raise their awareness of self-evaluation and continuous assessment.

CHAPTER 2

ONLINE TEACHING JOURNEY DURING
THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC:
ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES
OF EFL TEACHERS

ASMA RAHMANI

Description of the context

In the Algerian educational context, the English language is introduced as a second foreign language. Usually, the primary contact with this language is scheduled for the first year in middle schools, and it lasts for seven successive years: 4 years in the middle schools followed by three years in the higher schools. The extent to which learners are exposed to the different English skills varies according to learners' specialties and streams. For instance, learners in the literature streams are more exposed to English than the scientific, technological, and sciences of economics streams. After succeeding in the final test known as the baccalaureate exam, learners select the fields they will pursue to study at the university. Algerian educational systems in general, including the higher education sector, necessitate no fees as the Algerian constitution laws guaranty free education for Algerians and even foreigners. It is worth mentioning that the Algerian higher educational institutions and universities depend on either the Arabic or French languages when delivering the different courses. Undoubtedly, exceptions are made in the foreign language department. The Algerian higher educational system has witnessed reforms since 2004. The new three-cycle higher education framework: License, Master, and Doctorate or the LMD system, also known as the BMD system: Bachelor, Master, and Doctorate replace the classical system of education. These reforms aim at relating the university with its

social environment through the formation of future employers. Moreover, the basics of these reforms are to create a professional master's degree that could fulfil the markets' needs and fit the prerequisites of this globalized era. In this respect, constant calls to adopt English as the first foreign language to be taught at the different educational levels and even use it in administrative issues are gaining more support. Learning English in the departments of English, which usually belongs to the faculties of foreign languages, encompasses many subjects such as phonetics, linguistics, academic writings, English and American literature, English and American civilization, methodology of research, in addition to other subjects. The evaluation of each subject obeys specific patterns, but in general, each subject relies on both formal exams at the end of each semester and informal exams, i.e., quizzes plus grades on the presence and participation in the classroom. Even in other departments, where English is taught as ESP, subjects` evaluations fall in the same spectrum. Before the COVID-19 pandemic, all subjects were taught as face-to-face courses. After March 2020, the shift towards online learning was mandatory viewing the surrounding circumstances. This shift was unexpected and challenging, leaving many schools unprepared. Just like many other countries, Algeria is no exception. In the post-period of this pandemic, precisely in late August and early September 2020, the health authorities allowed partial face-to-face learning courses under a well-determined and restricted sanitary protocol. The Ministry of Higher Education permitted face-to-face courses in some subjects and eventually their assessment. On the other hand, some subjects and their assessment remained online. This indicates that the total online learning type was replaced by blended learning. The decision about the courses` learning and assessment type was based on the data and details provided in the canvas, i.e., the ministerial authorized framework of each educational cycle in any field.

The available resources

In general, data shows that projectors are the primary technology afforded in the majority of English departments. In addition, teachers and many learners possess their personal computers or tablets. On the other hand, the Ministry of Higher Education offered a set of platforms that provide learners with many worldwide books, reviews, and academic journals in different languages. Access to these platforms is free for only teachers and learners integrating into one of the Algerian universities or institutions.

For instance, System National de Documentation en Ligne SNDL is an Algerian platform that could be considered as a research gate towards various national and international academic documents in many fields such as the Humanities and social sciences, sciences, and techniques beside other sciences. Also, a Moodle educational platform for each Algerian university or higher institution was offered by the Ministry of Higher Education as an online educational context for Algerian teachers and learners. This platform was gaining more support among teachers and some learners as it assists them to have more academic interaction outside the formal learning schedules. Its use became compulsory after the COVID-19 pandemic. Moreover, Moodle was highly appraised by teachers as it represented a secure online environment to post and publish teaching materials as learners should be formally subscribed to fully consult courses, activities, and interact. However, during and after the post-pandemic era, teachers, as well as learners, tend to use more technological devices to ensure the continuity of the learning process. This could not deny the fact that a considerable number of teachers and learners used some technologies or electronic tools before the COVID-19 pandemic to reinforce face-to-face learning, namely personal computers, smartphones, social network sites, and eventually some educational platforms. During the pandemic, I started to use some of the social networks that were well spread among the Algerian learners, such as Facebook. In this respect, I and many Algerian teachers started to create some educational pages or groups and use the Messenger application. Moreover, teachers and learners in Algeria embark on the adoption of the Google classrooms as many universities suggested the use of this application to ensure that the content of subjects is within the reach of learners regarding the preventive measures that they were obliged to respect. Both Google Meet and Zoom applications gained the support of learners and their teachers as they were more practical and easier to use. In September, various universities printed courses on CDs and offered them to the learners who suffered from some internet-related problems.

Being a teacher at Batna-1 University and during this recent pandemic, I relied first on courses posted on Facebook and then on the educational platform Moodle. In addition, I created educational virtual classes in the Google Classroom application. Furthermore, I periodically organized online meetings in both Google Meet and Zoom applications.

Typical lesson

During the early phases of the pandemic era, I taught ESP in the Department of Media and Communication. Publishing courses on Facebook and then on Moodle platform was the primary step that was done to ensure the continuity of learning. The courses were offered under PDF form, but so far, this was not sufficient. In this spectrum, I sought that the creation of virtual classes was a must, not only to assimilate the face-to-face learning but also it was an attempt to accompany learners and correctly introduce the notion of online learning with its main pillars. In this respect, the Google Classrooms were created for each group I taught. The content of these online classes varies to fulfil learners' educational needs, learning preferences, and expectations. Undoubtedly, the content of these classes highly emphasizes the major goal and objectives of this subject. For instance, recorded videos were posted in which I explained the courses orally and relied on the slides of PowerPoint presentations that I created for each lecture. Furthermore, a series of activities were provided to learners to practice. The constant feedback from me as a teacher and from learners and their peers was ensured through the discussions in both comments and videoconferencing, organized periodically for such purposes. Occasionally, we used both the Telegram and WhatsApp applications for groups. It is worthy to mention that after the unprepared shift towards the online teaching viewing the restrictions; I relied on Google classrooms rather than the Moodle platform as the interaction in the latter requires the identification of learners through the professional emails. This was not possible as a substantial proportion of them ignore the fact that they should obtain these emails from the university authorities and even ignore how to demand them online. Without learners' identifications, learners could access only courses' content as anonymous guests and were automatically deprived of the total interaction in this platform. They could access neither the activities nor the ability to comment or discuss. According to the nature of the subject i.e., ESP and following the ministry instructions, learners in this department were assessed online through emails and Google forms which were created for this educational purpose. Starting from December 2021, in addition to teaching ESP in the previously mentioned department, I will start teaching in the department of English at Batna-2 University, Algeria. During the academic year 2020-2021, I taught both Phonetics and Academic Writing. The Ministry of Higher Education suggested the adoption of blended learning to ensure the gradual reintegration to the formal educational circumstances before the COVID-19 pandemic. In this respect, and as

learners are more used to the online tools, I adopted the flipped classrooms principles in which I provided learners with the teaching materials to be checked at home and we devoted the classroom sessions for discussions, exchanging new information, and solving activities. Their evaluation mode was based on the face-to-face exams following the ministry instructions.

Challenges/issues faced while teaching online

As mentioned earlier, online teaching is considered, to some extent, as a novelty in the Algerian higher educational context. As in many countries, the sudden changes in the educational field regarding the COVID-19 pandemic's preventive measures negatively affected the appropriate application of this new and challenging type of learning. It is worthy to mention that my Ph.D. thesis` theme was based on using online learning in Algerian higher education before the appearance of the COVID-19 pandemic. My prior experience gained from the field work of my thesis partially assisted me to avoid certain mistakes that may hinder the effectiveness of this type of learning. The major hindrances met in the application of online learning is the poor infrastructure that could not promote its relevant establishment. In many rural and even urban cities, Internet-related problems and the lack of digital devices among learners were reported as the fundamental problems that face learners in online learning. This was consolidated in a survey I conducted at the early adoption of this type of learning. Notably, this was highly remarked in the strict early phases of the general lockdown when the internet cafes were closed. Since August 2020, the situation changed and improved because learners could get access to the internet. For instance, learners substituted their old Sims with new ones that offered higher well-improved 3G and G4 services and bought smart phones that were in their affordance. Also, the cybercafes were reopened. Furthermore, at the beginning of online learning, many learners were afraid of embracing this new type of learning and even resisted it. Occasionally, some learners launched some hashtags against the adoption of online learning on departments` official pages on Facebook. A minority of learners downloaded the handouts of the subject from Moodle and integrated the Google classrooms. Their virtual interactions were insignificant at first. What is noticeable is the fact that the series of activities and video conferencing that were permanently published and organized for them promoted their integration and even boosted their virtual interactions. Also, the verbal and written encouragement they constantly received motivated them to do more and even encouraged them to invite their peers to integrate into those online courses. Like the

majority of human beings, learners feared the unknown (Carleton, 2016). Indeed, learners resist online learning as they believe that it is an arduous task and out of their reach. The simplicity of the virtual classes and the commonalities between these online classes and the social network sites they are already using encourage learners to embrace this new educational journey.

Solutions

Regarding the internet-related problems, the classroom content and the videoconferencing sessions were scheduled at precise timings. We tried to avoid the rush hours and eventually work in the early morning hours when the internet is less used. On the other hand, the internet-related problems did not affect the pace of courses in terms of solving activities, commenting, or discussing. Occasionally, the extension of deadlines was ubiquitous, basically when the internet flow was weak. Viewing the acute need to motivate learners to interact, we constantly provide constant constructive feedback and reward them verbally during the online meetings and even through written comments. Moreover, we attempted to boost competition among learners by challenging them to do extra activities or look for extra information in a limited time. Also, the variation in the teaching material attracted learners' attention and fulfilled their learning preferences. In the same spectrum, the variation in activities` type motivates them, i.e., individual, pair, or group activities challenge them to boost their critical thinking and strengthen their communication and collaborative skills. What highly encourages learners and boosts their motivation to learn is informing them in advance about the main goal, the related objectives, and the type of assessment they will face at the beginning of each course. This assisted them to organize their new online learning journey. When using online learning, we relied on formative assessment. This measure assisted us to trace back some hindrances that learners were facing when using this type of learning. Occasionally, the results of these assessments provided us with constructive feedback that oriented us about the need to modify and adjust the teaching material, for instance, the type of the activities, and even invited us to change some parameters of the courses' content. Also, learners` commitment and engagement to learn were improving due to these assessments. These latter highlights stress the extent of the seriousness of this new type of learning.

Opportunities/benefits of online teaching

What is noticed is that contrarily to face-to-face learning, online learning is conducive for and workable with learners who tend to be, already, self-regulators. Additionally, the flexibility of learning and learners' management of time, place of learning, and courses' pace encourage or reinforce self-regulation among learners as they feel more responsible about their own learning and its pace. Also, the online interactions fervently facilitate communication between learners-teachers and learners with their peers. It is remarked that many psychological problems such as anxiety, shyness, and the fear to talk in public used to hinder the efficacy of learning in face-to-face settings; however, in the online context, these impediments are overcome. In addition, it is remarked that a significant proportion of learners in online learning tend to work collaboratively and enhance many skills. Their critical thinking is promoted mainly in discussions through forums or videoconferencing. One of the prerequisites of online learning and its combination with adult learning is the insurance of distinct conditions that improve independence in learning. This latter increases learners` intrinsic motivation to learn and leads to innovation, creativity, and autonomy of learning. Prominently, online learning highly supports a surge in demand for constant learning from both parts: teachers and learners. In this respect, both sides need to be updated about the advancement in the technological side, which boots the spread of knowledge and increases learning.

References

Carleton, R. N. (2016). Into the Unknown: a review and synthesis of contemporary models involving uncertainty. *Journal of Anxiety Disorders 39*, 30–43. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.janxdis.2016.02.007

CHAPTER 3

ONLINE TEACHING CHALLENGES AND BENEFITS IN THE ERA OF THE CORONAVIRUS PANDEMIC

KHADIDJA SAMIRA ZITOUNI

Description of the context

In the 21st century, learning a foreign language becomes indispensable because of the increasingly interconnected and interdependent world. In this respect, Algeria enjoys linguistic diversity. According to the country's constitution, Article n° 2, the official religion of the Algerian state is Islam, the official and national language is Arabic, and the Amazigh language is the 2nd official language, as approved by the 2016 amendment to the constitution. However, this does not give justice to the linguistic diversity that is constituted by a significant number of language varieties.

In Algeria, all children have a right to free and compulsory education. The educational system comprises four stages; first, they go to primary school, which lasts for five years. Then, they take four years of middle school and three additional years of secondary school. After taking a national exam named the baccalaureate, students move to higher education. Concerning the higher educational level, the infrastructure comprises 57 public institutions for higher education, which include 27 universities, 13 university centres, 6 national schools, 6 national institutes, and 4 teacher-training institutes. Students typically study for three years for a bachelor's degree, two years for a master's degree, and at least three years for a doctorate.

Algerian Dialect and Amazigh are spoken in everyday life and in informal situations. Students are primarily taught in Arabic. For historical reasons, French stands as the first foreign language. They start learning it in the 3rd

year of primary school. English, on the other hand, is considered the second foreign language. It is introduced in the 1st year of middle school. Algerian students meet it only in the classroom while the "national environment is far from being supportive" (Baloto, 1996, p.31).

Once in higher education, all scientific and technical fields are taught in French; even the dissertations and theses are written in the French language. However, being an international language used in all fields, English is taught throughout the world and in different fields. So, in 2019, the Ministry of Higher Education has ordered the inclusion of English in all domains as well as in the administration sectors.

Therefore, with the spread of English worldwide, learning English has become a must and prerequisite. Its importance in today's times cannot be underestimated or ignored, seeing as English is the language spoken today by many more second or foreign languages than first language users, and such a feature is found in no other language.

The available resources

Teaching a foreign language has always been facilitated by using technological tools, such as audio-visual aids, computers, mobile phones, videos, data show projectors, online applications, and so on. The rapid development of technology has led to dynamic changes in creativity and paved the way for students' demands. It has substantially reinforced and created a powerful learning atmosphere (Ratheeswari, 2018).

In today's pandemic world, Algeria, like many other countries, has adopted online learning due to some precautionary measures. In fact, the process of online learning, though ancient in its origins, has in our time become a novel and perplexing subject, especially within its practical engagement. Hence, the adoption of technological devices and the online software is more critical today than ever before for both teachers and students, especially as they are the only devices that help students carry on their studies online.

The Algerian government decided to close down all educational institutions and move all lectures online as an emergency response to the spread of COVID-19 coronavirus. Teachers were asked to put lectures on the Moodle platform. Accordingly, each Algerian university has used other software, besides Moodle, in order to facilitate online learning. The most frequent applications that were used include Google classroom, Google

meet, Facebook, Zoom, and Easyclass. As an EFL teacher, I have first used Easyclass, which was proposed by the administration where I teach. However, students have very low participation in this application. For this reason, I was obliged to use Facebook to teach and interact with my students because it was the only application that all students are familiar with.

As students start a new academic year, many changes have occurred. After all, we have all learned from our previous experiences. Thus, the university has created accounts for all teachers and students on the Moodle platform. Additionally, training workshops were organized for teachers to explain how to use different online applications, such as Moodle, Google classroom, Google meet, and Zoom. University libraries have opened their doors as well, to provide access virtually and for free.

Consequently, in my situation, I have used various applications to guarantee that students receive the knowledge effectively. Hence, posting lectures on a Facebook page created by the department administration, Google Classroom, and Moodle platform, then organizing a virtual session on the Google Meet application. In face-to-face classes, the university provides a laptop and a data show projector for teachers to present their lectures.

Typical lesson

Online learning was not 100% successful for teachers or learners due to several factors. Obviously, most learners were not interacting for different reasons such as lack of knowledge on how to use the Easyclass platform, poor internet connection, the radical change that occurred, etc. This has led me to use the Facebook application as an alternative tool because students are familiar with it, and they can easily have access. They receive their lectures and assignments in PDF or Word-Office format.

After six months, the Ministry of Higher Education declared that students would come back to have two weeks of revision lectures and then pass their exams so that we can move to a new academic year. It was impossible to teach all the presented lessons in two sessions. Therefore, there was a need for PowerPoint presentations with the help of a data show projector.

As the new academic year started, a new protocol was proposed. Students were divided into small groups to avoid large gatherings. Students from