

## An Investigation of the Major Challenges Encountered by Algerian EFL Teachers and their Impact on the Students' Academic Performance during the Coronavirus Pandemic

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### ABSTRACT

*Technology has given language instructors enormous opportunities to utilize online platforms to improve learners' language competence in difficult situations like the COVID-19 epidemic. This study attempted to investigate the challenges that Algerian EFL teachers and students experienced while using online teaching during the Coronavirus pandemic. In doing so, five (05) teachers and fifty (50) students from the English Language Branch at Mohamed Khider University of Biskra, Algeria participated in the study. A mixed-methods approach consisting of interviews and questionnaires was used to explore the teachers' challenges in online education and their impact on students' academic performance. This study focused on answering the following four questions : what are the major challenges encountered by Algerian EFL teachers in remote language teaching during Coronavirus pandemic? What is the impact of these challenges on students' academic performance? What are the problems faced by EFL students? And is online language learning a real alternative to face-to-face education? The findings indicated that EFL teachers encountered several challenges such as time management, learners' poor engagement and motivation, technological illiteracy and gadget-related issues. The findings also indicated that EFL students encountered other challenges such as the lack of variety in language learning materials, distraction at home, troubles with the Internet flow, the access to e-learning platforms, and they find remote learning tedious and monotonous due to the lack of interaction with their peers and teachers. Moreover, based on the data gathered from the tools employed in this study, the aforementioned challenges had a significant negative impact on the students' academic performance; i.e., their language proficiency has decreased after the shift to distance language learning.*

*Key Words: Online platforms, COVID-19 epidemic, Algerian EFL instructors and students, negative impact, students' academic performance.*

### INTRODUCTION

Language learning and teaching is currently regarded as a fascinating subject around the world. Despite the fact that English language teaching and learning has faced several challenges and issues over the years, EFL instructors have played a critical role in generating significant curricula innovation that may assist overcome these difficulties. In today's modern world,

English language materials have mostly used technology to improve the learning and teaching environment and address potential problems. Yedov, Gupta, & Khateapal(2018) state that several language materials have implemented new technologies, such as online platforms and software (Cited in Khatoony & Nezhadmehr, 2020).

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

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

## 1 Literature Review

Susilowati (2020) asserted that learning activities cannot be postponed since this would demotivate students and disrupt their learning rhythm. During this epidemic, it is the government's responsibility to establish new regulations so that learning activities may continue to be done safely. Meanwhile, all educational practitioners, instructors, and lecturers should be prepared to adapt their teaching plans to online learning, as a new method of teaching and learning during the Covid-19 epidemic. The selection of technical equipment, platforms, and materials should not place additional strain on the students (p.71). Susilowati made a solid argument on improving students' language listening skills. She claims that, after technological

tools and materials, the strategy employed is the next most significant consideration. Because time and Internet connection are limited, professors can employ an approach in which students are encouraged to study independently and critically through the use of WhatsApp listening records. If the maximum amount of learning cannot be attained in each meeting, listening logs can be a good alternative because students will have more time to learn and practice independently at home.

According to Rosalina et al., (2020) there are three aspects regarding the issues that teachers face when it comes to online learning in the Coronavirus epidemic period. They are the supporting facilities such as Internet access, a device, and a budget. Then preceded by the learning process such as the engagement, the explanation, the generation gap between teachers and learners, and the way to control students also challenge to create an effective climate towards the process. Similarly, Anita et al., (2020) claim that there is a conflict between five levels of involvement and five related variables of online learning processes. Learners, teachers' past exposure to online learning, technological competence, pedagogical understanding, and the support system are the five components. Teachers in this study were still having trouble improving the quality of their students' online learning engagement. Nonetheless, these teachers had great hopes that they would be able to improve their competence and professional practices as a result of a growing knowledge of the inadequacies of their online learning delivery and a reinvigorated sense of dedication.

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

Lastly, Yunus et al., (2021) suggest that, despite the potential to learn new technology, the problems faced by prospective teachers outweighed the benefits in the long run. The lack of prior

experience in the field of virtual education, as well as their teacher education program's lack of preparation and likely lack of knowledge from both school instructors and university supervisors, may have all contributed to making this experience more difficult and stressful.

### 1.1 The Concept of online learning

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

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

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

## 1.2 Types of Online Learning

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

### 1.2.1 The Computer-based Online Learning

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

### 1.2.2 The internet-based Online Learning

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

## 1.3 Online Learning and Language Teaching

There are a range of online teaching technologies available, however, sometimes, they present a lot of challenges. These challenges and concerns related to digital technologies vary from installing errors, downloading problems, login issues, audio and video issues, and so on. Sometimes students find online teaching to be boring and unengaging. Students want two-way interaction which sometimes gets difficult to implement. Mediocre course content is also a major issue. Students feel that the lack of community, technical problems, and difficulties in understanding instructional goals are the major barriers for online learning (Dhawan, 2020).

### 1.3.1 Online Teaching

Online teaching requires proper preparation, and the resulting design of the course should be creative and should enable learners to engage with each other and the materials (Porter, 2004). On the one hand, Deejing (2014) claims that the web based learning model which uses collaborative learning techniques and a scaffolding system to improve learners' competency at the tertiary level is made up of 6 components that are (1) Problems, (2) Resources, (3) Collaboration, (4) Related Cases, (5) Scaffolding and (6) Community. On the other hand, Clarke and Hermens (2001) argued that online learning is student-centered because learners can control their own pace of learning, and the activities could be adaptable to best suit the preferred style of learning of students. Online learning offers opportunities for active learning (Dolence & Norris, 1995). Furthermore, Students have the ability to engage in discussions, to voice their views and to share their expertise freely using good online learning platforms or apps, regardless of classroom size and time (Harasim, Calvert & Groeneboer, 1997).

### 1.3.2 Online Learning and its Relation to Language Teaching

In language learning context, online learning is there for learners in a manner where they can use it differently depending on their particular needs or as a way to develop formal education; that is, it is used as an alternative learning environment integrated into formal teaching (Gluchmanova, 2015). In reality, online learning provides more interactive possibilities and varied audio-visual aids that allow learners to practice the language they are learning and to involve learners in more online learning activities.



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

## 2 The Study

In this study, a mixed-methods (qualitative) approach was employed. Two data collection methods (teachers' interview and students' questionnaire) were designed and implemented in order to collect the data needed. The main objective was then to understand the big challenges that both EFL teachers and students face, as well as the impact of these challenges on the students' language proficiency. The study population involved all students enrolled in the English language branch at Biskra University (Algeria) and all the teachers of English in the same branch. Out of this large population, a small sample of five teachers and fifty students participated in the study due to the pandemic which led to the university's closure in March 20, 2020, thus decreasing the teachers' and students' availability for long period, or rather the rate of their participation.

### 2.1 Analysis and Interpretation of the Teachers' Interview

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

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

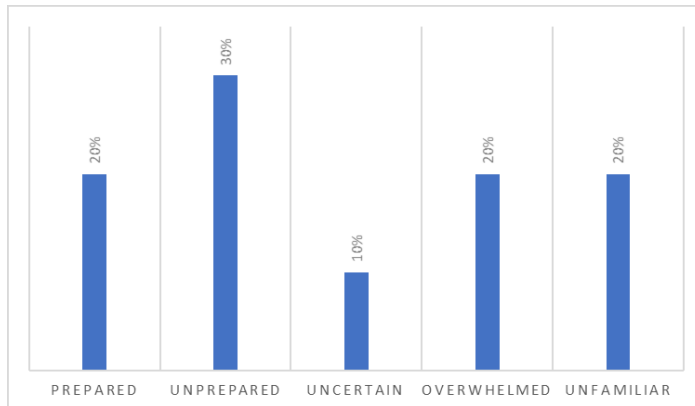
**Prepared for the shift:** 20%

**Unprepared for the shift:** 30%

**Uncertain:** 10%

**Overwhelmed:** 20%

**Unfamiliar:** 20%

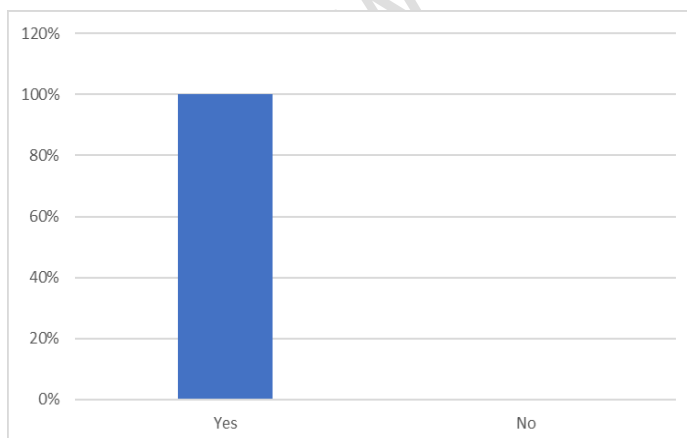


**Figure 1: EFL Teachers' Experience with the Shift from Traditional to e-Learning Method.**

This question was intended to elicit from the teachers responses about their overall experiences with the abrupt transition from traditional or face-to-face learning to distance learning. This question was designed to determine whether or not the teachers were prepared for this shift. Based on the teachers' answers, it was found that 30% of them were unprepared for the shift to distance learning.

### Item 2. Did you face any challenges in distance learning?

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





**Figure 2: EFL Teachers and Challenges in Distance Learning.**

**Item 3. What were the major challenges you faced in online classes?**

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

**Time Management: 5%**

**Learners' Engagement: 18%**

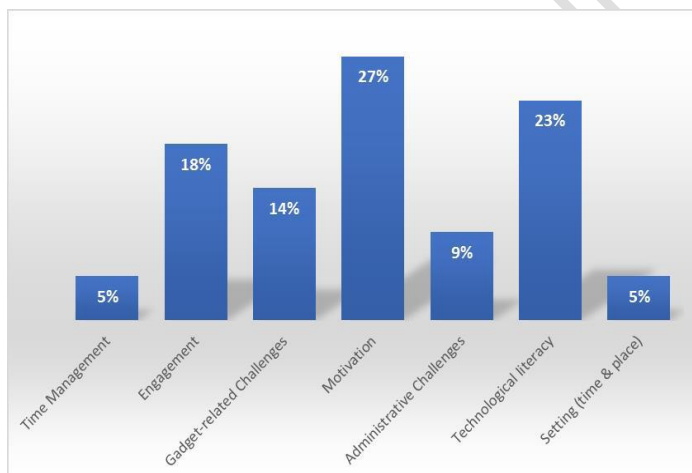
**Gadget-related Challenges: 14%**

**Learners' Motivation: 27%**

**Administrative Challenges: 9%**

**Technological Literacy: 23%**

**Setting (time & place): 5%**



**Figure 3: EFL Teachers' Major Challenges in Distance Learning**

**Item 4. How did you deal with these challenges?**

Based on the answers, the teachers attempted to address some of the challenges as follows. They stated that they devoted practically all of their time to online learning which took longer than traditional learning. Furthermore, when it came to the issue of learners' engagement, they almost had no answer. Additionally, they claimed that they used the university's laboratories due to the lack of gadget, yet they had a difficult time getting access to these labs. Last but not least, they were assisted by their students and/or colleagues to overcome technical problems and get familiar with the use of online platforms.

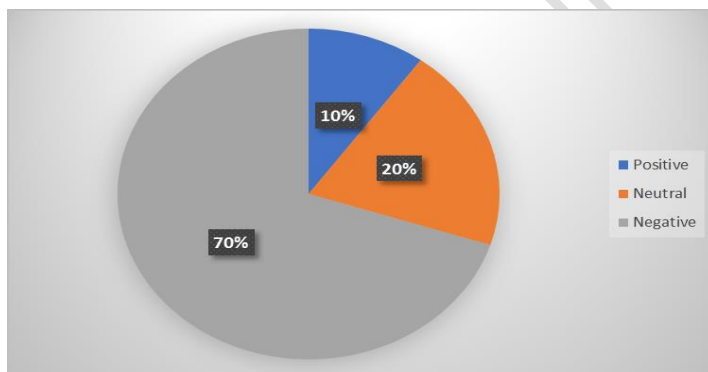
#### Q5. How did these challenges affect your learners' academic performance?

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

**Positive: 10%**

**Neutral: 20%**

**Negative: 70%**



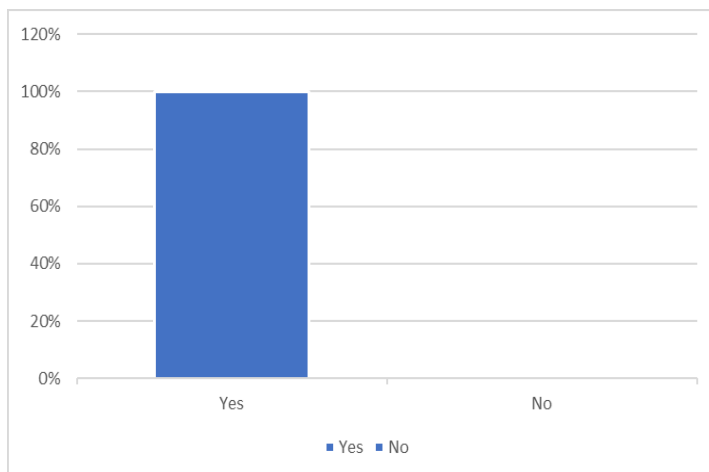
**Figure 4: The Impact of the Challenges on Learners' Academic Performance.**

With an overall proportion of 70%, we were able to infer that a substantial majority of teachers strongly agree that the challenges they experienced in distance learning had an impact on learners' academic performance. 20% of these instructors were undecided about whether these problems had an influence on students, mostly because they believed the time span was

insufficient to provide an accurate assessment. Whereas, 10% of the instructors claimed that the difficulties they experienced as teachers had no impact on students in remote learning.

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

Considering the first half of this question, it was clearly noted that all instructors (100%) agreed that online learning was less efficient in Algeria than traditional face-to-face learning, particularly in the context of language learning.



**Figure 5: Efficacy of Distance Learning in Language Learning in Algeria.**

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

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

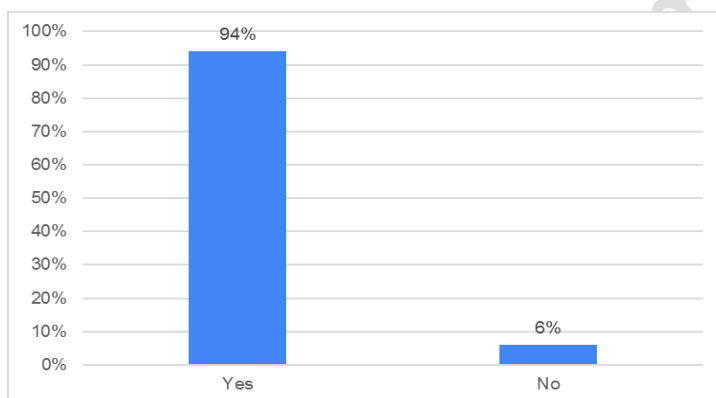
This open-ended question sought to gather the teachers' additional comments and suggestions about the implementation of remote learning for teaching foreign languages in Algeria. They believe that instructors should include or rely more on technology, and they should include

digital platforms such as YouTube channels or blogs into their classrooms on a regular basis. Other instructors, nonetheless, were enthusiastic about the incorporation of e-learning in Algeria, but only under certain conditions. Professors claim that in order to have a successful distance learning experience, both teachers and students need to be trained on how to use and benefit from e-learning. Instructors also emphasize that the transition from traditional to remote learning should be gradual, and that the administration should play a key role in this by providing teachers with the appropriate resources.

## 2.2 Analysis and Interpretation of the Students' Questionnaire

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

This question was designed in order to identify the students who did not study online during the COVID-19 pandemic.

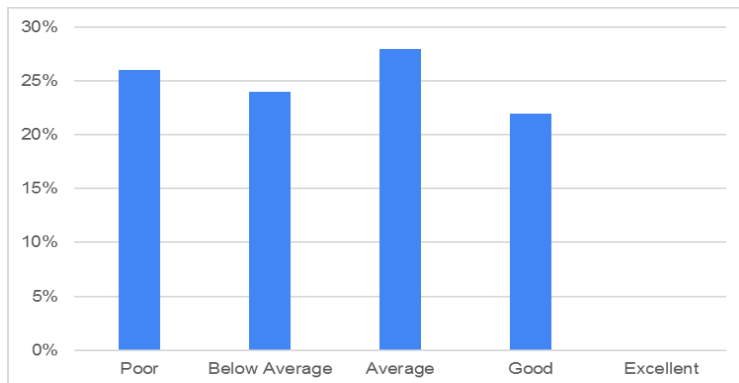


**Figure 6: The Proportion of Students Who Studied Online During COVID-19 Pandemic.**

Based on the students' responses to this question, it was found out that forty-seven (47) students among the total number of students comprising the sample studied online during COVID-19 Pandemic, while three (03) students did not.

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

This question attempted to elicit answers from Algerian EFL students about their overall experience with online education. The main objective was to determine whether teachers should continue to teach online or switch (turn back) to face-to-face classes.



**Figure 7: Students' Overall Experience with e-Learning.**

In this question that our sample were asked about their experience with distance learning, as represented by **Figure 7**, the answers were as follows:

**Thirteen (14) students answered Average (28%)**

**Thirteen (13) students answered Poor (26%)**

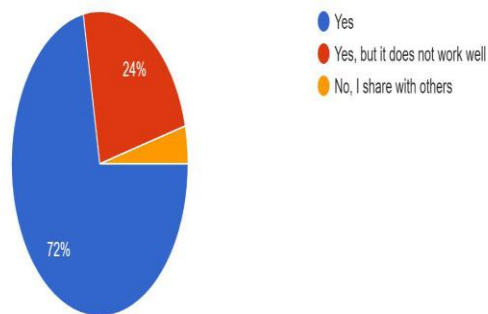
**Twelve (12) students answered Below Average (24%)**

**Eleven (11) students answered Good (22%)**

**No one answered Excellent (0%)**

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

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

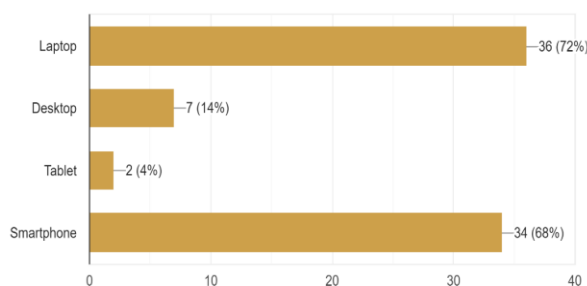


**Figure 8: EFL Students' Access to a Device for Online Learning**

According to **Figure 8**, the majority of students have access to a device for online learning (72%), and (24%) of the students own a device, but it does not function well. Additionally, based on the data gathered from this question, (04%) of students do not have a personal device.

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

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



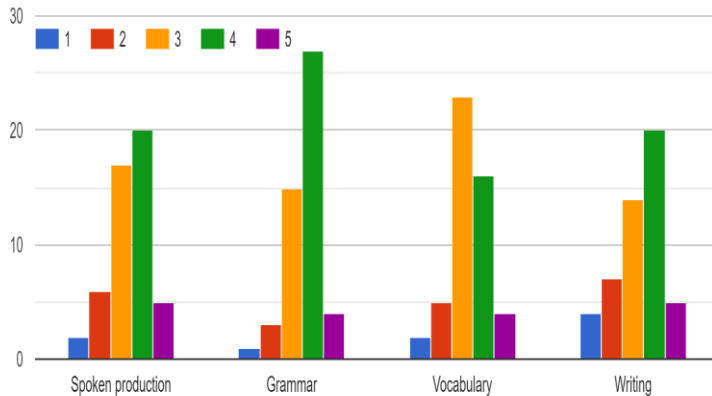
**Figure 9: Devices Used by EFL Students in Distance Learning**

**Figure 9** shows that the majority of students used laptops and smartphones to learn online. A small percentage of EFL students use desktops or tablets to learn.



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

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

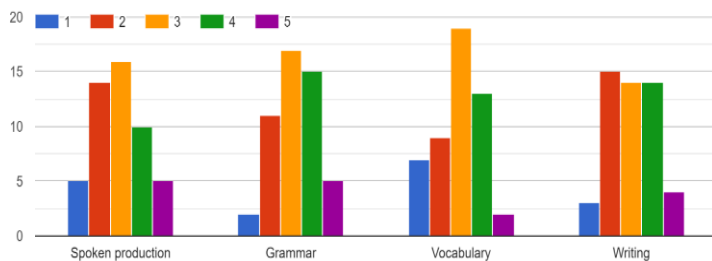


**Figure 10: Students' Language Proficiency Before Engaging in Distance Learning**

**Item 6. Rate your level in the following language aspects after studying online.**

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

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



**Figure 11: Students' Language Proficiency After Engaging in Distance Learning**

**Analysis of Items Q5 and Q6**

These two questions are similarly designed to the pretest/posttest tool, but they do not include a treatment, since their goal is to collect numerical data to determine the impact of e-learning on students' language proficiency (Academic Performance). In order to achieve that, Microsoft Excel was employed to calculate the differences between students' rates (After-Before) of the four language aspects above. After calculating the differences, the means of the differences of the four language aspects were calculated. The table below shows how we can determine the nature of impact:

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

**Table 1: The Impact of e-learning on Students' Language Proficiency**

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

**Table 2: Mean Result of Students' Speaking Skill**

The mean's difference is equal to (-0,02) which is less than 0. Therefore, based on **Table 1**, there is a negative impact on EFL students' speaking skill before and after studying online.

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

**Table 3: Mean Result of Students' Grammar**

The mean's difference is equal to approximately (-0,41) which is less than 0. Therefore, based on **Table 1**, there is a negative impact on EFL students' grammar before and after studying online.

| Students' Vocabulary |             |
|----------------------|-------------|
| Mean                 | -0,3        |
| Standard Error       | 0,134771159 |
| Median               | 0           |
| Mode                 | 0           |
| Range                | 6           |
| Minimum              | -3          |

|                         |             |
|-------------------------|-------------|
| Maximum                 | 3           |
| Sum                     | -15         |
| Count                   | 50          |
| Confidence Level(95,0%) | 0,270832784 |

**Table 4: Mean Result of Students' Vocabulary**

The mean's difference is equal to (-0,3) which is less than 0. Therefore, based on **Table 1**, there is a negative impact on EFL students' vocabulary before and after studying online.

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

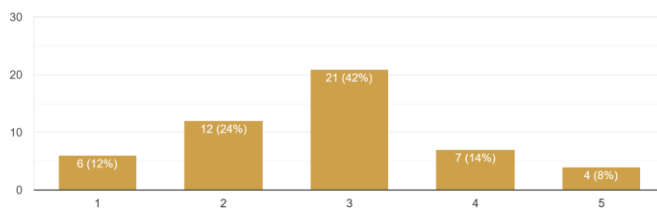
**Table 5: Mean Result of Students' Writing Skill**

The mean's difference is equal to (-0,28) which is less than 0. Therefore, based on **Table 1**, there is a negative impact on EFL students' writing skill before and after studying online.

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

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

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

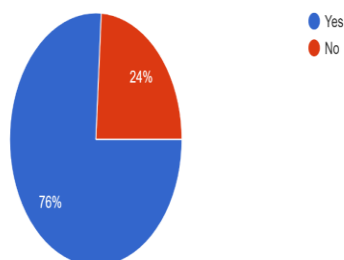


**Figure 12: EFL Students' Time Management in Distance Learning.**

The result from the analysis of this question as displayed in **Figure 12** shows that nearly half of the sample (21 students) handled their time in an efficient manner in distance learning (42%). Additionally, During the distant learning period, (11) students effectively managed their time (22%). However, during the remote learning period, (18) students did not manage their time properly (36%).

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

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

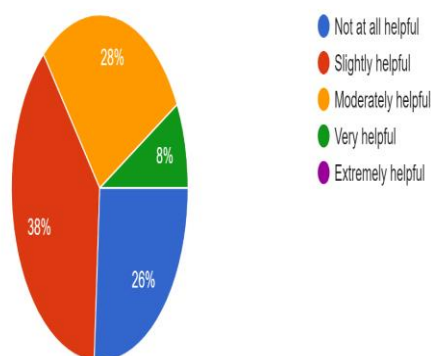


### Figure 13: The Proportion of EFL Students Who Faced Issues in Distance Education

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

### Item 9. How helpful was/were your teacher (s) while studying online?

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



### Figure 14: EFL Students' Feedback about EFL Teachers' Helpfulness in e-Learning

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

### A follow up question: Please explain why?

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

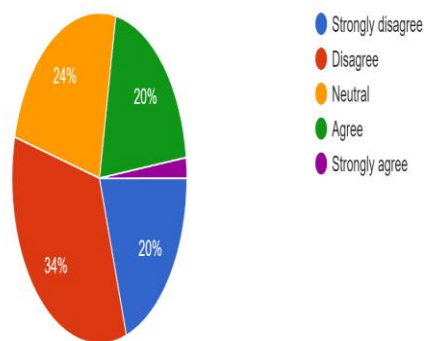


Based on the data gathered from this question, students expressed their dissatisfaction with the lack of variety in educational resources. During distance learning, several students claim that teachers only used textual materials (pdfs), and very few teachers delivered lessons through YouTube videos. Aside from the issue, there was also a lack of interaction and communication among teachers themselves, as well as with students. Some instructors, according to numerous students, take a long time to reply to students' emails or concerns, or do not respond at all.

Furthermore, several students claim that the distance learning evaluation was unfair. Some students simply copy-paste each other's assignments, which is unfair to others who work hard. Lastly, some students praised their professors' efforts and had a positive attitude toward them.

#### Item 10. Do you agree that online learning is an effective alternative to face-to-face learning?

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



**Figure 15: Students' Perspective on the Efficacy of Remote Learning for Foreign Language Teaching**

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

#### Discussion and Interpretation of the Findings

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

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

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

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

teachers stated that the lack of interaction had a negative impact on their students' English communicative skills.

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

The analysis of the data gathered through the students' questionnaire led to deduce the following points :

Initially, from EFL students' responses, the majority of EFL students indicated that they were instructed online due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Yet, they expressed mixed feelings about the entire experience of shifting from face-to-face education to distance learning. In distance education, half of the students (50%) had an average to good experience; however, the other half (50%) had a below average to poor experience throughout online education. The researchers believe that these disparities are attributable to the fact that some students encountered issues that other students did not go through, such as a slow Internet connection; some students have access to high-quality Internet depending on where they reside, while the students who reside in rural locations lack adequate Internet coverage. Besides, the intricacy of Internet platforms is another issue that some EFL students confront. Some students are more technologically savvy than others and are. Finally, the fact that EFL students have a range of learning styles contributed to these disparities in remote learning experiences. In this regard, some EFL students were happy with remote learning since it suited their preferences.

In a similar vein, the researchers discovered that (28%) of EFL students do not own or share a device for instructional purposes, based on their feedback. The researchers think that if students share the device they use for education with others or are unable to use it when required, they will be less organized and distracted, which will negatively influence their learning process.

Besides that, (68%) of students use their cellphones for educational purposes. The researchers believe that the students who use smartphones for studying will be distracted by notifications from other apps, especially when smartphones lack the functionality of laptops or desktop computers.

Moreover, from the analysis of the numerical data of the students' language proficiency before and after the engagement, it was discovered that the shift to language distance education and the challenges faced had a negative effect on the students' academic performance. (76%) of these students had difficulties during their distant language instruction experience. They showed their dissatisfaction with the learning materials delivered by teachers based on the data obtained. This led to discussing the necessity of having a range of learning resources in order to accommodate students' learning styles. Thus, some students may find remote learning tedious and monotonous. Other EFL students reported that they had technical issues and problems with the Internet flow, which made the researchers believe that these technical issues may frustrate students and cause them to feel disconnected from the learning process.

### Conclusion

The present study explored EFL teachers' and students' challenges during the sudden implementation of technology for online language classrooms during the Coronavirus Pandemic at the level of the English Language Branch of Mohamed Khider University of Biskra (Algeria), and the impact of these challenges on EFL students' academic performance. In order to achieve the study's aims, the researchers used a mixed-methods approach (qualitative and quantitative methods) because it serves the nature of the study. More significantly, the chosen approach allowed the researchers to elicit the attitudes of Algerian teachers and learners about e-learning as far as the Algerian educational system is concerned.

The results revealed that teachers encountered several challenges during their distance language instruction. These challenges consisted mainly in time management, learners' engagement, gadget-related issues, learners' motivation, administrative challenges, technological literacy, setting (the learning environment). Moreover, EFL students have also encountered problems during their remote learning process. These problems are the lack of

variety in the learning materials, the access to decent-quality Internet and technological devices, students' learning preferences, and the access to distance learning platforms. Furthermore, the researchers concluded that the challenges faced by both EFL teachers and students had a negative impact on students' academic performance. Equally important, EFL students, like teachers, agree that remote learning is not more effective than face-to-face language instruction in Algeria, and that it can be considered as a supplement, not a substitute.

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