The COVID-19 Pandemic and its Impact on English Language Teaching in Higher Education

By

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Abstract

This study aimed at identifying the university staff members' view points, practice level, and the extent of their involvement in / coping with teaching English online over the pandemic of covid19. For achieving these aims, an interview, a checklist, and a questionnaire were prepared by the researcher. The interview had some questions to know their opinions on EFL online teaching. The checklist was categorized into eight dimensions related to practices of teaching online. The questionnaire included 30 items all of which are related to the study aims. After assuring their reliability and validity, the instruments were applied on 15 staff members in 2020/2021. The study findings showed positive and satisfactory reactions to the instruments. In the light of these findings, the researcher recommended reinforcing the teachers' role in activating and encouraging online teaching of English as a solution to the challenges imposed by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Key words: the COVID-19 pandemic, English Language Teaching, Higher Education

جائحة كوفيد –19 وأثرها على تدريس اللغة الإنجليزية في التعليم العالي

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أستاذ تدريس اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية (TEFL) المساعد بقسم المناهج وطرق التدريس – كلية التربية جامعة المنيا

مستخلص:

هدفت الدراسة الحالية الي التعرف علي اراء ومستوي ممارسات ومدي مسايرة اعضاء هيئة التدريس بالجامعة لمتطلبات التدريس فى ظل جائحة كورونا. ولتحقيق هذا الهدف تم اعداد مقابلة شخصية وتصميم قائمة تدقيق (checklist) مقسمة الي ثمانية ابعاد واستبانة. وبعد التأكد من ثبات وصدق الادوات تم تطبيقهم علي 15 عضو هيئة تدريس في العام الجامعي 2020/2021 وقد اوضحت النتائج ان مستوي اراء وممارسات اعضاء هيئة التدريس للابعاد المتصلة بالتدريس عبر الانترنت ومدي مسايرتهم لمتطلبات التدريس في ظل الجائحة كانت ايجابية ومقنعة الي حد كبير. وفي ظل هذه النتائج توصي الباحثة بتعزيز دور المعلم في تنشيط وتشجيع تعليم اللغة الانجليزية عبر الانترنت كحل للتحديات التي فرضتها الجائحة .

الكلمات المفتاحية: جائحة كوفيد –19، تدريس اللغة الإنجليزية، التعليم العالي

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Introduction

The COVID-19 pandemic is a great challenge to all educational systems. This challenge offers guidance to teachers, institutional heads, and officials on addressing the crisis. Education is considered as one of the social institutions. If it fails to lead the society to success, it will do harm to the other institutions. Therefore, it is the time now for these institutions to play an active role to fight against the challenges imposed by the COVID-19 pandemic. Educational institutions have to be aware of this alarming pandemic and bring reforms into action as soon as possible.

The number of cases of COVID-19 is increasing rapidly. To control the sources of infection, and make all possible efforts to minimize its spread, Egypt's government followed the policy of strict home-based quarantine and physical distancing among people across towns and cities. To protect university students from being affected by the disease, the Ministry of Higher Education called for online teaching and learning among teachers and students at all levels. Educational institutions were temporarily closed down. Online teaching, therefore, substituted the traditional way of classroom teaching and became the basic mode of teaching. In this case, educational institutions such as schools and colleges have to benefit from asynchronous learning, which works best in digital formats. The normal classroom subject teaching should include varied assignments and work that puts COVID-19 in a global and historical context.

This sudden global outbreak of COVID-19 has led to adopting the online teaching, including the teaching of languages. As the

online teaching of English-as-a-foreign-language (TEFL) in Egyptian universities is facing new challenges as EFL teachers have been positively exploring new solutions. To understand how EFL teachers were coping with the challenges, this research is set up to examine EFL and TEFL staff members opinions and practice level of online teaching in response to the disruption of normal teaching plans.

The researcher did so by adopting a qualitative approach through conducting interviews with 15 TEFL teachers from Minia University. Analysing these interviews, the researcher found that teachers had a clear idea about features, advantages, and constraints of online EFL teaching and that they acquired information and communication technology (ICT) literacy through understanding students' learning needs, online teaching practice, and the necessity of integrating regular classroom teaching methods into online instruction. A checklist was also prepared for faculty members with the objective of having a clear vision of their practices in light of online teaching. A questionnaire about the extent to which staff members can cope with the requirements of covide19 was also administered.

Harrison (2020) mentioned that "since many countries have imposed a lockdown on movement, and many schools have subsequently closed their doors, vast numbers of previously tech-shy teachers have to learn very quickly how to teach and learn using online resources. This might be through delivering lessons using virtual classrooms or providing online self-study material for students, both of which may be new modes of lesson delivery for many".

Since the rise of the internet in the 1990s, English language (EL) teachers have had what might be described as a difficult relationship with technology. Initial teacher education has been slow to embrace digital ways of teaching and learning, meaning that many EL teachers feel that they have been poorly prepared to use technology in their teaching (Clark, 2018). Consequently, many EL teachers have been resistant to the digital wave which has revolutionised other areas of our lives. Understandably, there are a number of worries which teachers have regarding introducing technology into teaching. Three of the most common worries are:

- **Technology is isolating** – learner interaction is limited, and is dissimilar to the kind of ways that they will be required to use language in the real world.

- **Teachers are being deskilled**, and the essence of teaching is being lost.

- **The rise of technology** will soon mean that teachers are made redundant.

Digital learning management systems, communication tools and e-learning platforms are playing a crucial role during this pandemic. Software and apps can help teachers to manage, plan, and deliver the learning process. For language teachers in Egyptian universities, teaching plans were disrupted and their knowledge and skills of ICT literacy were challenged. Due to the life-threatening global pandemic, language teachers had to move instruction online. In this process, the change in teachers' perception of education and language teaching must have changed accordingly. How would

teachers organize efficient activities via online teaching? How would they cope with online teaching?

None of the teachers was sure of the effectiveness of such large-scale online language instruction. Worries and stress lingered on the teachers' minds. How did EFL teachers in universities perceive and respond to their disrupted teaching when online teaching became the main mode of delivery? It is a question that needs urgent investigation as the teachers' perceptions and responses to online teaching over COVID-19 greatly influence the quality of language education in Egyptian universities.

This paper presents a qualitative study, through interviews, a checklist, and a questionnaire on 15 EFL and TEFL teachers' perception of online teaching and their responses to, and strategies for, coping with their disrupted teaching. Unfortunately, little has been reported on how EFL teachers have responded to such a drastically challenging teaching and learning environment (Fu and Zhou, 2020). This study was set up to fill the research gap. Findings are expected to help EFL professionals to understand how they can benefit from learning about their colleagues behavior in facing the new challenges by trying to understand online teaching platforms, online language teaching methods, and online class management, etc.

As part of the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, teachers were confronted with the need to adapt to online teaching. A paper by (Kong et al 2020) presented the results of a survey of early career teachers. First, the researchers analysed the extent to which they maintained social contact with students and mastered core

teaching challenges. Second, they analysed potential factors (school computer technology, teacher competence such as their technological pedagogical knowledge, and teacher education learning opportunities pertaining to digital teaching and learning). Findings showed that information and communication technologies (ICT) tools, are instrumental in adapting to online teaching during COVID-19.

Context of the problem

The Egyptian Ministry of Higher Education's effort for modernizing education in Egypt called for the integration and development of technology and education, creation of a good environment of education, and upgrading of teaching concepts, modes and content to train talents for the information age. It is pointed out that as faculty members' quality and competence are key factors affecting teaching quality, university English teachers must actively upgrade their knowledge and skills in modern education technology and adapt themselves to meet the needs of university English teaching in the technology-enhanced learning and teaching environment. It is necessary for education reform to be carried out through the preparation of high-quality, and creative teachers to quicken the mode of talent training with modern technology. As such it was necessary to investigate the Faculty members' reactions as for the use of online learning and the different practices they undertake in this process and to what extent they can cope with the requirements of COVID-19.

In many situations, technology can actually facilitate interaction. It is only a matter of thinking in how many of us now use our phones and social media such as WhatsApp or Facebook to

communicate. This can be equally true of interaction in a virtual learning environment – if managed correctly. Opportunities for language use can be optimised and students will have plenty of interaction with each other. And, whether we like it or not, these forms of interaction, mediated through digital channels, now account for a high percentage of interactions in the 'real world'.

The Study Questions:

1. What are the university language staff members' practices of online teaching over COVID-19?

2. What are the university language staf members evaluation of online learning over COVID-19?

3. To what extent can language staff members cope with the COVID-19 pandemic requirements for EFL online teaching?

Aims of the Study:

This study aimed to achieve the following:

1- evaluating the staff members use of online teaching over COVID-19 to promote students' learning of English at the Faculty of Education.

2- investigating staff members' practices of the use of online learning in their English classes.

3- evaluating the extent to which staff members can cope with COVID-19 requirements for EFL online teaching.

Significance of the Study:

The study was expected to add knowledge to the Arab library and to have reflections on the field of online teaching and learnig. This study might be a basis to other studies about online learning and teaching English at the university level.

What adds to the significance of the study is that the studies related to this field are rare (according to the researcher's knowledge). The study can also add a specific significance to the training programs of staff members through focusing on online learning and teaching as it still needs more investigation.

Definition of Terms:

The study used the following term:

The COVID-19 virus: Coronavirus disease 2019 is defined by Cennimo (2021) as an illness caused by a novel coronavirus now called severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus 2 which was first identified amid an outbreak of respiratory illness cases in Wuhan City, China.

WHO (2020) defined it as:

"That virus, which belongs to the known corona viruses, which may cause disease to humans and animals, which was described by the World Health Organization as a pandemic, and which appeared recently in the Chinese city of Wuhan in December, 2019. Its symptoms are manifested in fever, fatigue, dry cough and pain, as this virus is transmitted to humans through small droplets that are scattered from the nose or mouth when an infected person coughs or sneezes. The virus can also transmit to humans, causing this disease, through droplets scattered on Surfaces surrounding a person"

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Delimitations:

Results of this study were delimited to:

- **Topic limits:** The checklist included only eight main dimensions (assessing students—delevering content–community– supporting students–formative assessment– classroom climate–course evaluation– and time management)

- **Place limits:** The study is limited to 15 TEFL and EFL at Minia University (Faculty of Education and Faculty of Arts).

- **Human limits:** The study was conducted on only (15) TEFL & EFL staff members –Minia University in 2020/2021 academic year.

- **Study limits:** The level of the participants accuracy, validity and objectivity in responding to the checklist, the interview, and the questionnaire.

Literature Review

In the light of the sudden outbreak of COVID-19 people's regular schedule of life, education and work was drastically changed. Universities were not away of this at all. Lessons at all levels were being delivered online instead of face-to-face in the classroom. Scholars and teachers have researched online teaching in the field of education in recent weeks. However, due to this sudden pandemic, time limit and lack of facility to carry out research, the literature search resulted in only few publications related to online teaching of English over COVID-19.

Compared to traditional class-room teaching, online learning proved to be successful in higher education since it provides the option of recording lectures to be on the server for later access and

use by students anytime and anywhere (Yunus et al., 2006 and O'baoill, 2009). The more online viewing of web sites, the higher students' performance is (Traphagan et al., 2010). From this perspective, Jones (2017) carried out a research aiming to determine the effect of live and recorded web lectures. The results showed the benefits of combining both of live and recorded sessions. In online learning, participants appreciated interaction and the ability to clarify information without delay; in recorded web lectures, they were interested in the ease of use, convenience and flexibility.

As for improving and enhancing students' performance level in higher education, Siritarungsri's study (2011) aimed to evaluate the use of online learning to promote students' learning. Findings showed high achievements of graduate students owing to the construction of online social communities and successful transfer of knowledge and skills to students in their locations. In their study, Lust et al. (2012) clarified students' continuous use of educational web due to their growing perception of onlines' usefulness via over time exposure.

Educational webs are effective and have high performance when applied to tasks that require comprehension as shown in the findings of Giannakos' and Vlamos' study (2013). Nagy's and Bernschutz's study (2016) also proved online's high impact on students' learning performance and achievement in higher education. In their study, they figured out the positive effectiveness of using online video presentations in the highly improved learning performance of the students.

Web-learning, particularly the live one is going to change the future of learning regarding the teaching methodology and interactivity (Wolf, 2016). In this respect, a study was conducted by Zhao and Ma (2020) to discuss web learning in higher colleges during the pandemic of COVID-19. The findings revealed the importance of combining web learning with face-to-face classroom teaching in higher education as it changes the teacher-student relationship so that the teacher is a service provider rather than the only source of information and the learner becomes knowledge builder and collaborator for lifelong learning.

Looking forward to future developments and possible implementation in teaching English in higher education, Dogoriti's and Pange's study (2012) aimed to investigate university tutors' perceptions, motivations and engagement with the use of web technology in their ESP classes. The findings highlighted the need for more extensive use of internet broadcasting in ESP, showing university tutors' positive motivation to use webcasting. Constantinou and Sophocleous (2020) administered a study in which they recommended the use of technology for the professional development of ESP teachers.

A review paper was administered by Liu et al. (2014) to address English language learning and teaching within the context of Science via Computer-Assisted Language Learning (CALL) approach and to determine the use of learning technologies in science-based literacy. More specifically, Bouabdallah (2015) conducted a research to find out the difficulties that students faced while practicing listening and speaking skills. The findings revealed the power of

using internet technology resources to reinforce students' existing practice of those skills in their ESP classes by providing them with authentic audio and visual language materials within the context of their major.

In case of language skills, university students support online foreign language teaching to develop and practice their language skills as shown in Yuce's study (2019). For listening skills, internet technology is a useful resource (Dang et al., 2012). Therefore, Baehaqi (2014) carried out a study to improve the listening skills among the students of English department by using podcasts as useful internet technology resources. Findings proved the positive effect of podcasts on improving the basic listening comprehension skills including guessing the meaning within a context as well as skimming since podcasts promoted low proficient students' repetitive and frequent practice of listening.

For critical language skills, Liu et al. (2014) stated the necessity of providing ESP students with critical thinking skills in their language learning since there is a limited number of studies on how language teaching can be applied into ESP. Poce et al. (2017), carried out a research to help develop university students' argumentative and critical evaluation skills via webcasting. The findings showed the high impact of using webcasting activities in online classes via videos and guided discussions on students' critical thinking skills of prompted reasoning, elaboration of ideas as well as knowledge connections within language writing skills.

Information Technology (IT) in developing countries is always a new and critical topic, and looking at it as an alternative for

traditional education, especially in English language learning and teaching, makes conservative educational systems and trainers to have a pessimistic view on it (Younesi & Khan, 2020). In Iran, IT has a special place in teaching the English language as a complement for traditional education. It also works independently as online English courses, online English institutes, and virtual Universities.The researchers used a questionnaire with 25 questions to find the English learners and trainers' point of view. The researcher got 220 responses from academic English learners and trainers from twenty-three Universities. The researchers found the importance of online English teaching during the COVID-19 pandemic

The benefit of technology for language teaching and learning has been highlighted in many studies; its role is not only to engage learners in the learning process, but also to promote learners' motivation and learner-centered instruction (Chapelle, 2005). The benefit has been further enhanced and expanded by virtue of technological advancements which have introduced mobile devices such as smart-phones and tablet computers to language learning contexts.

Teaching and learning of languages have been enabled to transcend time and space limitation (Demouy et al., 2016). The convenience, mobility, and effectiveness of mobile learning have become evident (Liu et al., 2008). The benefits of mobile learning should be extendable to EFL contexts as well. The integration of mobile technology into EFL teaching and learning is thus feasible in ways that facilitate students' enhancing their language competence.

Although mobile learning seems to be more central to learners than teachers, guidance and advice from teachers are always required by students (Kukulska-Hulme, 2009).

However, teaching with technology can be a complicated and difficult task for some teachers under the influence of social and contextual factors (Koehler et al., 2011). Therefore, before applying mobile learning, teachers need to learn and grasp adequate technological and pedagogical knowledge (Tai et al., 2015). The technological pedagogical content knowledge model, as adopted in this study is frameworks that can help in understanding how teachers think and take actions accordingly.

The aim of Chia's (2020) study was to identify the English teachers' points of views about the place of the internet in English language instruction as well as their online teaching experiences during the COVID-19 pandemic. A questionnaire was used to collect data from 30 English staff members of the the University. The resuls showed their strong belief in the internet – tools to facilitate English language skills. However, not much success regarding the integration of the various internet-based tools was acknowledged. Limited ICT competence, lack of enough pratice on teaching online, poor internet connection, power failures, and high costs of internet subscription, were amongst the challenges enlisted by the subjects in this study. The researcher recommends the effective integration of E-Learning as a post-pandemic pedagogy for use of English staff in universities under study.

Fu and Zhou (2020) investigated the opportunities and challenges of online teaching. The authors reported that the

hardware facilities and wi-fi conditions are uneven across schools and areas; teachers' IT skills cannot meet the needs of online teaching; the online resources and platforms are insufficient for online teaching; students, parents, and schools have different expectations of online teaching; the need for quality individualized education cannot be satisfied by online teaching. In view of these challenges of online teaching, the authors suggested optimizing wi-fi and hardware facilities and integrating quality online resources and platforms be seriously considered.

Jiang et al. (2020) discussed the principles and mode of online teaching over COVID-19. These principles include simplicity in technology, immediate feedback, interactive communication, and precision management. Their suggestions are consistent with the counter measures and suggestions for enhancing the quality of online teaching proposed by Wang et al. (2020) who explored the advantages and rapid development of online teaching in China during COVID-19 and the benefit of the assistance from 5G technology in improving teaching and learning. They proposed a range of suggestions which include creating a smart environment for home-based teaching and learning, choosing suitable online teaching modes, and enhancing interaction in online teaching.

An article by Cheung (2021) reports a case study of an English teacher who conducted lessons via Zoom during the COVID-19 pandemic. The study focused on the factors influencing her technology integration in synchronous online teaching mode. Using data from classroom recordings, stimulated-recall and semi-structured interviews, this study uncovered how Zoom functioned as

a substitute for face-to-face lessons. The findings revealed that although there were fewer interactions between the teacher and her students, teaching in synchronous online mode provided the teacher with opportunities to utilize certain online features to augment methods of checking student understanding. The study identified the teacher's pedagogical beliefs, the context and professional development as factors that influenced the level of technology integration in her Zoom classes.

As for improving and enhancing students' performance level in higher education, Siritarungsri's study (2011) aimed to evaluate the use of webcasting to promote students' learning at the college of Nursing. Findings reported outstanding achievements of Nursing graduate students owing to the webcasting's construction of online social communities and successful transfer of knowledge and skills to students in their locations.

Educational webcasts are effective and have high performance when applied to tasks that require comprehension as shown in the findings of Giannakos' and Vlamos' study in 2013. This is in line with Nagy's and Bernschutz's study (2016) which also proved webcasts' high impact on students' learning performance and achievement in higher education. They figured out the positive effectiveness of using online video presentations via webcasting in the increasingly improved learning performance of the students in the business faculty.

Online learning, particularly the live one, is going to change the future of learning regarding the teaching methodology and interactivity (Wolf, 2016). The findings of a study conducted by Zhao

and Ma (2020) revealed the importance of combining webcasting with face-to-face classroom teaching in higher education as it changes the teacher-student relationship so that the teacher is a service provider rather than the only source of information and the learner becomes knowledge builder and collaborator for lifelong learning

A study by Rinekso & Muslim (2021) aimed at investigating EFL university students' perceptions and challenges on the use of synchronous online discussions. Employing virtual observations and semi-structured interviews, five Master students of English education study program of a public university participated in this study. Data were based on three domains of communication types for e-learning; content-related, planning of tasks and social supports.The findings showed that the students had positive response to the employment of synchronous online discussion. They believed that synchronous online discussion was a good online teaching mode where task negotiation, task planning, opinions, questions and answers can be done easily. In addition, they could improve critical thinking and writing skills as well as getting social supports. Meanwhile, poor internet connection and misunderstanding of tasks became the challenge

The purpose of a study by Rochmawati, Fatmawati, Sukma, and Sonhaji (2021) was to find out motivation, attitude, and readiness, as well as demographic factors in online learning, applied linguistics. The instruments were online learning motivation, learning readiness and learning attitudes Likert scale questions cumulated using quantitative method with multiple linear regression.

This study utilized a group of 139 Diploma – students. Study results mentioned that attitude to online learning, readiness of online learning, age, gender, and education are all important predictors of the motivation for education. The results showed that the level of education and readiness of online learning were variables that have a considerable effect on motivation.

Lukas and Yunus (2021) conducted a study to investigate the challenges ESL teachers faced in implementing e-learning during COVID-19. This research was a case study which involved 20 primary ESL teachers. Data collection was done through an interview to explore teachers' e-learning experiences and challenges in teaching the English language. Based on the findings, the majority of teachers expressed that the use of e-learning was effective with various limitations such as teachers' readiness to adopt e-learning, accessibility to mobile phones and Internet connectivity, classroom management in term of low students' participation and assessment.

The results obtained by Gautam (2020) showed that English teachers attended three kinds of events that include training programs to learn technology, events to learn about the online resources for English language teaching and professional development events to enhance their professional skills. Participation in these events made English teachers digitally confident to run the classes online and increased awareness of the integration of online resources in English language teaching.

This literature review shows that though language teacher information technology literacy have been profoundly and systematically researched in terms of conceptual understanding,

relationships among components within each model, and application on various education levels and in various subject areas, no exploration has been carried out into language teacher practices about online EFL teaching in Egypt, especially language teachers' information technology literary for online EFL teaching over COVID-19.

The available research into online teaching over COVID-19, in spite of being rare, provides insights into further research. The present study was an attempt to investigate language teachers' practices of online EFL teaching and their information technology literacy in response to the disrupted teaching plans in the university.

Summary of the previous studies and their relation to the present study

From the above-mentioned review of literature, it became clear that most studies used the descriptive design as it is suitable to this kind of research. They also used the interviews. Checklists and questionnaires as the main instruments of collecting data.

There is shortage in studies related to the impact of COVID-19 on teaching English at the university level. The present study made use of those previous studies to enrich the theoretical and practical dimensions in building the checklist, the interview and the questionnaire of the study. The researcher also made use of the findings of these studies, absorbed and identified the similarities and differences among them.

The present study is different from the previous ones in being an organized and analytical study of the degree and level of staff

members' use of the eight dimensions refleting their work throughout the online teaching at the university level.

Design and Procedure:

Design:

The researcher used the descriptive design. This design is suitable to the nature of the study and its objectives.

Study Population:

Study population was formed from the staff members in the academic year 2020/2021.

Instruments:

1- The Interview (Appendix 1)

Interviews were suitable and appropriate for the present research as their intention were to gather data about the teachers' practices of online EFL teaching and their acquisition of ICT literacy in the initial stage of online EFL teaching. The semi-structured interview was adopted as one of the main tools to elicit verbal data for this study.

2- The Checklist (Appendix 2)

The researcher prepared and developed the checklist of the staff members' practices of the eight dimentions related to EFL online teaching and learning. The checklist included 68 items divided into eight main dimensions each of which had a different number of items.

Validity of the Checklist:

To emphasize the validity of the checklist, it was judged by eight staff members who were concerned with the topic of the

present study. They expressed their view points in the accuracy, stating, and clarity of the items. According to their recommendations, some items were modified. It included 68 items in its final form.

Table (1)

Correlation coefficient of each item in the checklist with the total degree of the dimension it belongs to

No.	Correlation coefficient	No.	Correlation coefficient	No.	Correlation coefficient	No.	Correlation coefficient	No.	Correlation coefficient
1	**0.66	16	**0.68	31	**0.83	46	**0.76	61	**0.75
2	**0.77	17	**0.75	32	**0.76	47	**0.65	62	**0.73
3	**0.68	18	**0.77	33	**0.82	48	**0.74	63	**0.77
4	**0.87	19	**0.78	34	**0.84	49	**0.72	64	**0.82
5	**0.83	20	**0.79	35	**0.89	50	**0.88	65	**0.80
6	**0.78	21	**0.84	36	**0.85	51	**0.85	66	**0.70
7	**0.80	22	**0.68	37	**0.87	52	**0.73	67	**0.86
8	**0.84	23	**0.75	38	**0.82	53	**0.86	68	**0.89
9	**0.88	24	**0.88	39	**0.81	54	**0.76		
10	**0.89	25	**0.78	40	**0.77	55	**0.77		
11	**0.83	26	**0.82	41	**0.84	56	**0.85		
12	**0.76	27	**0.69	42	**0.88	57	**0.66		
13	**0.78	28	**081	43	**0.77	58	**0.76		
14	**0.81	29	**0.83	44	**0.76	59	**0.87		
15	**0.68	30	**0.70	45	**0.82	60	**0.77		

** Indicates that the correlation coefficient is statistically significant at the level of (0.01).

Reliability of the Checklist:

The reliability was emphasized through using Cronbach Alfa of all eight dimensions of the study. The reliability coefficient was (0.96) and this is accepted. See Table (2).

Table (2)

Alpha – Cronbach coefficients of the total reliability of the checklist and its dimensions

Dimensions	No. of items	Reliability coefficient
1- Assessing students	10	0.96
2- Delivering content	13	0.95

3- Community	10	0.96
4- Supporting students	10	0.96
5- Formative assessment	6	0.94
6- Classroom climate	10	0.96
7- Course evaluation	4	0.93
8- Time management	5	0.94
Total reliability	68	0.96.5

Table (2) clarifies that the checklist is of a very high degree of reliability, as the value of the Cronbach alpha coefficient of the total reliability is (0.96.5). The values of the Cronbach alpha coefficients for the reliability of the checklist dimensions ranged between (0.93- and 0.96), which represent high degrees of reliability for the data collection tool.

3- **The Questionnaire** (Appendix 3)

The questionnaire was prepared by the researcher to evaluate the extent to which the staff members could cope with the different requirements imposed by the COVID-19 pandemic. The questionnaire consisted of 30 items related to the procedures undertaken by staff mmbers to face the pandemic. Results showed that the staff members could, to a great extent (8%), cope with this crisis as for personal engagement in digital learning to enable students to work at ease on a specific task and to allow them to work in small groups. Animations (89%) were found to be the best digital approach motivating many teachers to teach. Digital approaches (92%) can motivate students to learn. The majority of staff members (90%) agreed that the video lectures that they delivered could help students to learn effectively. Online quiz (85%), having multiple-

choice questions (MCQ), was preferred by most of the students for testing their understanding of the subject.

Staff members (89%) also highlighted the usefulness of the student version of the software downloaded from the internet. Many of them (75%) felt that occasionally people disturb students during their online teaching. They stated that they had a moderate number of responsibilities at home but they had sufficient time for online teaching. Only few of them (15%) claimed that they had many responsibilities at home and they did not have any time left for online teaching. (43.2%) of the staff members were questioned by students who got their doubts clarified during online lectures. Most of the students (95%) used laptop/desktop computers, many of them used smartphones and very few students (8%) used tablets.

Students prefered to learn from video lectures delivered by their faculty member.   The online quizzez, having multiple-choice questions (MCQ), were preferred by students (96%).

The Study Variables:

1- The Independent Variables

  Social Type: It has two types: males and females

  Qualifications : lecturers, assistant professors and professors.

2- The Dependent Variable

- The points of view of the staff members on teaching online.

- The impact of covid19 on the EFL staff members' practices of the online teaching.

- The extent to which the staff members cope with the requirements of teaching English over COVID-19.

Statistical Treatment

The SPSS statistical program was used to analyze the chechlist, the interview, and the questionnaire. The statistical treatment related to the main questions of the study were used as follows:

1- To answer the first question, an analysis of the responses on the interview of the participants was done to identify the exact responses of 15 independent teachers to examine their reactions to teaching and learning online over covid19 pandemic. (Interview – Appendix 1)

2- To answer the second question, the correlation coefficient was used to measure the level of staff members' use of the eight dimensions of online teaching. (Checklist – Appendix 2)

3- To answer the third question, an analysis of the responses on the questionnaire was done to identify the extent to which language staff members can cope with the pandemic requirements for EFL online teaching. (Questionnaire – Appendix 3)

Methods

The study reported here was a qualitative inquiry into what the language teachers practices of online EFL teaching over COVID-19 are, trying to construct meaning from their experience, feelings, and thoughts in this trying time. The researcher carried out this study by framing it within the theory of constructivism. According to constructivism, reality is constructed by individuals interrelating with their cultural and social world: teachers, seek perceptions of the real world where they live and work and develop subjective understanding from their own experience. According to Merriam (1998), qualitative researchers are interested in understanding the

meanings people construct and this was the purpose of the present study.

Participants

The participants were chosen through convenience sampling due to the sudden outbreak of COVID-19 and urgent need to prepare online EFL teaching. Convenience sampling is "selecting a sample based on time, money, location, availability of sites or respondents" (Merriam and Tisdell, 2016 : 98). Through convenience sampling the researcher contacted some TEFL and EFL staff members from Minia Faculty of Education and Faculty of Arts. They expressed their concerns, worries, and anxieties over the influence of the covid 19 pandemic on EFL teaching and their follow-up online instruction. After initial talks, they agreed to respond to the checklist, the interview, and the questionnaire.

Participants' Backgrounds

The participants were chosen mainly because the courses they taught online represented different types: Methods of Teaching English, English Listening, Speaking, Reading, Writing and Linguistics. At the same time, the participants' backgrounds and teaching experiences are different.

Participants have differences in their ages, educational backgrounds, years of teaching, courses taught, students' levels, and the online platforms they used. These differences presented a diverse coverage of online EFL teaching. The participants' online teaching had been conducted for 6 weeks when the data were collected.

Treatment:

1- Interviewing EFL teachers

Methodologically, interviews are used frequently in educational research because they are an instrument that can be used for in-depth investigation into the issue at hand (Miles et al., 2014). According to Creswell (2014), interviews can be carried out in a face-to-face and one-on-one way, by telephone, in focus groups, or through emails. Interviews involve generally open-ended questions, which are few in number and designed to elicit views and opinions from the participants.

Interviews are a powerful data collection instrument for qualitative research as they are useful when participants cannot be directly observed; through interviews participants can provide historical information; interviews allow the researcher to control over the line of questioning. Interviews are thus a natural and socially acceptable way of collecting qualitative data in various situations while focusing on diverse topics for in-depth information (e.g., Zhang, 2010). The interviewer can adopt flexible approaches and probe into newly emerging issues, and the interview protocol helps to keep the interaction on the right track, which is a systematic coverage of the domain (Rubin and Rubin, 2011).

Interviews are suitable and appropriate for the present research as their intention was to gather data about the teachers' practice of online EFL teaching and their acquisition of ICT literacy in the initial stage of online EFL teaching. The semi-structured interview was adopted as one of the tools to elicit verbal data for this study. The researcher worked as the interviewer and asked broad

open-ended questions to direct the interview, and the participants were encouraged to give detailed responses to the questions: Questions covered seven different sections such as teachers, professional development, context, resourses, class management, class organization, and presentation form.

Data Collection Procedures

1- The Interview

The data were collected on late November 2020. Faculty members were interviewed once and the interview lasted for 30 minutes or so. Other participants were in the form of written reflections on their online EFL teaching based on their responses to the interview questions. (Appindix 1)

Besides the interview data, the researcher took field notes as well during and after the interviews. The data collection ceased when there were sufficient data for the exploration of the participants' reflections on online teaching and their teaching practice during the pandemic of COVID-19.

Data Analysis

The data analysis procedures began immediately after the first interview by the researcher. Subsequent data in audio clips collected from the interviews were transcribed and processed. In addition, the notes taken during each interview were typed, read, and summarized.

2- The Checklist

A checklist consisting of eight dimensions was used to identify the different online practices undertakrn by the staff members when teaching English during the pandemic of COVID-19. (Appendix 2)

3- The questionnaire

Aquestionnaire of 30 items was used to find the extent to which the faculty staff members could cope with the requirements imposed on them over the COVID-19 pandemic. (Appendix 3)

The following procedures were undertaken by the instructors:

1. Checking out whether students had a computer, tablet, or smartphone to access students' curriculum.

2. Asking students whether they had internet service (WiFi) in their homes.

3. Mailing the instructional materials and assignments to the students.

4. Planning to track the online learning progress of students to ensure they were on the right track.

5. Using a variety of methods to make students aware of the attempts to provide ongoing education to them, including email, phone calls, direct mail, text messages, social media postings, website notices, etc.

6. Documenting and keeping track of everything done to have evidence of the attempts of providing ongoing education.

7. Making a plan for solving problems students encountered when connecting to the online classroom.

8. Providing students links to webpages where they could find information, resources, and support for distance learning.

9. Providing instructions for using any online resources that might help to enrich the remote learning experience.

10. Reminding students to meet. Even if the online meeting occured at the same time as a classroom session, they

needed to be reminded on a day before the session, and then again, a few hours before it started.

11.   Having students knew the topics to be covered, how they should prepare, and what the instructor expected them to do. Specify that the instructor expected them to focus on the class and avoid multi-tasking.

12.   Aquainting studens if the instructor was taking attendance as well as any standards for participation.

Findings and Discussion

The COVID-19 pandemic provided an opportunity for all parties involved in teaching to update their understanding of EFL teaching and upgrade their knowledge and skills of information technology literacy to meet the needs of online teaching.

Therefore, the COVID-19 pandemic imposed many responsibilities on teachers to adjust their behavior in all aspects of life. In relation to teaching, which implies an interactive activity especially in foreign language teaching, which scope of action appears to have been reduced, at all levels, to distance education and virtual environments as the only available alternatives. In the digital era, one can say that the process of adaptation has been planed; after all, teachers are accustomed to the use of digital platforms and computer assisted learning. However, the situation is new in that teachers have to rely almost exclusively on virtual methodologies.

The participating staff members had diverse practices of online EFL teaching over COVID-19 as they compared it with traditional classroom language teaching to explore the features of

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online EFL teaching. Based on their online teaching experiences, they looked at online EFL teaching from different perspectives. Faculty members expressed their views of teaching and learning as limited by teachers' mastery of information technology in online EFL teaching:

Instructor1. 'Online instruction is completely different from traditional classroom instruction. In the traditional teaching classes, I prepare the lessons and deliver them in the classroom, and interact with students face-to-face, depending little on information technology'.

Instructor 2. 'Online teaching is delivered in a virtual environment. In Online teaching, face-to-face interaction cannot be achieved with the same effect as in a real classroom. Limited by the online teaching conditions, I find it difficult to guarantee the full involvement of students; the intended learning outcomes are closely related to self-management and mental ability on the students' part'.

As shown in those observations, online EFL teaching was totally different from traditional classroom teaching because of its heavy reliance on information and communication technology, which leads to students uncertain learning outcomes. This passive view of online EFL teaching was a result of worry and anxiety about the new and unfamiliar form of teaching.

Instructor 3. 'Online EFL teaching exceeds traditional classroom teaching as online learning platforms provide value resources for teaching and learning, from which the teacher can choose some key content. Besides, in terms of supervision and assessment of

students' learning process and outcome, more objective records can be retrieved from online teaching. The teacher–student interaction can take more forms. Besides, students are more active participants.This effectively supports their courage and confidence in responding to questions. Moreover, everybody has to take part in the activities'.

Instructor 4. 'Online teaching of EFL courses has its own qualities. Students can frequently watch teaching videos to meet their learning speed. Teachers can follow students' progress and provide them support with advice whenever possible'.

In spite of their optimistic views about online EFL teaching, some teachers did not ignore its challenges. One mentioned the disadvantages of online EFL teaching as related to teacher–student interaction, reflection of students' learning progress, and inequality in education caused by imbalance among network devices.

Instructor 5. 'Online EFL teaching has its drawbacks as for timely teacher–student interaction, reflection of students' learning development, and necessity of having network devices on students' part. The online teaching platforms cannot guarantee immediate interaction between teachers and students, which accordingly brings negative effect on the teaching efficiency'.

Practice – driven insight into online EFL teaching reflects thorough understanding of teaching and learning process of EFL courses, which is in turn central to online teaching practice. Several weeks of online EFL teaching experience widens instructors' understanding and increases their perception of online teaching.

In addition to the features of online EFL teaching, the change in the role of teachers is also one of the major themes emerging. The role of the teacher changed from the traditional knowledge transmitter and activity organizer to the supervisor for students' autonomous learning in online teaching.

Instructor 6. '*On the one hand, thanks to the huge effort put in place by the University, I was able to resume the course after just a short break. On the other, there was little time to reflect carefully on how to redesign it with online pedagogy in mind. I decided to grasp the opportunity to experiment with teaching methods that would replace the traditional face to face lectures*'.

Instructor 7. '*With online lessons, I revised the course plan regularly (a) I presented additional practice, and (b) I acknowledged one topic to be experimentally introduced using "the flipped classroom" methods, Even if this plan fits the remaining schedualed time on paper, in practice, I realised that online lessons tended to be more time-consuming than face-to-face lessons, resulting in fewer topics covered, or fewer activities completed, in the same amount of time*'.

Instructor 8. '*In fact, I stopped more frequently to ask for feedback from the part of my students. The students themselves tended to interfere more often. Therefore, I planned to add two extra lessons at the end of the course*'.

Instructor 9. '*As for the teaching materials, I continued using PowerPoint presentations in my teaching, but with the addition of hypertext. After each lesson, the exercises were done together and*

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some extra review exercises were uploaded, also for the benefit of students who could not attend'.

Instructor 10. 'Attending online lessons may cause some difficulties, because e-learning may be more tiring than traditional classroom learning. Reasons are generally related to the digital devices (connection problems, no device available, and lack of a suitable place)'.

Instructor 11. 'Two students only, in particular, said that they didn't like online lessons. They said that they did not find online lessons more attractive, easier to follow, more interactive and more informal, and that they did not feel more at ease at home'.

Instructor 12. 'In class, due to the more formal and "prescribed" environment, students may be hesitant to interrupt the teacher's flow of discourse. On Teams, by contrast, they have a tendency to to be more interactive (i.e. more shy students interacted more frequently'.

From this viewpoint, adopting teaching methods that would stimulate discussion was a rewarding choice, even if it is worth noting that flipped classroom methods may initially meet with resistance from students.

Instructor 13. 'During the first e-lesson, we agreed that students would post questions and comments on the chat during lectures. Taking turns with so many participants would be problematic otherwise. I thought that the decision of using the chat instead of the microphone goes a long way towards explaining the benefits of interaction'.

Instructor 14. 'The adult students – especially those in the age range 20–25 – feel comfortable and familiar with this medium, which

they actually see as less "confusing" than oral questioning. Because English is a FL for all students the possibility of writing instead of speaking may work as a motivation. Later on the chat became the means of interaction and discussion'.

Instructor 15. _'The simplicity of learning through technology is a highly skilled trial, and can offer a really useful support to the classroom. It can provide students with the chance to learn in new and exciting ways. Many plans and methods that teachers use with English learners do not change easily into an online environment. For example, students need to be speaking and writing in English, and teachers want to provide training to support them during academic discussions. That can be very inspiring and challenging to do in a large, online classroom'._

Cárdenas, et al (2021) mentioned that what is learned from the current situation will certainly allow teachers of English to complement teaching practices and to take full advantage of what the digital era puts at their disposal so that students have a more comprehensive learning experience. This should also have an impact on teacher education which is expected to pay more attention to distance and virtual education.

The research design carried out by Hakim (2020) focused on obtaining data based on two aspects: (1) Investigating the positive impact of technology integration in online EFL classrooms during the COVID-19 pandemic. (2) Addressing the challenges faced by the teachers in techno-led online classes during the COVID-19 era. The research findings indicated that despite having access to various techno-led applications and techniques still there were many

challenges faced by Saudi language instructors, such as the inability to have access to the modern equipment, interrupted or weak internet connection, learners' low motivation level and attention deficit. Despite these challenges, however, many language instructors reported a positive tendency to use technology in EFL online classes. The findings of the study shed light on the productive use of techno-led online EFL classrooms, focusing on strategic skill-based learning taking place and establishing a strong virtual link between the instructors and learners.

The study by Aydin, and Erol (2021) was conducted on middle school Turkish language teachers who conducted distance education during the covid19 pandemic. A semi-structured interview was employed to collect data which were analyzed with content analysis. The study findings revealed problems such as student attendance; digital problems such as Internet connectivity, infrastructure, and system; interaction, interest and commitment; literacy problems such as inability of distance education to improve written expression skills of the students; inadequate synchronous/online class count and duration, and poor parent-student-teacher cooperation. Based on these findings, it was recommended to design multimedia material that allow interaction and improve cooperation to solve digital problems.

Challenges Facing Participans

1. All participants expressed their anxiety during the initial stage of online teaching. They talked about the psychological pressure during their preparation for online EFL teaching.

2. Worries were mainly about their lack of proper information technology literacy for online teaching.

3. the insufficient conditions for online teaching and learning on both teachers' and students' part, and poor class management during online teaching.

4. Video recording had made the participants confused for quite some time.

5. Uploading the teaching materials onto the faculty site. They wre frustrated. Later, colleagues explained how to upload the materials to the site. The materials then can be ready for the students to access and download from their smart phones.

6. Teachers' information technology literacy was limited to the integration of digital equipment into classroom teaching, with little knowledge and skills for online teaching. This put them in a poor position, which restricted them from conducting online teaching effectively especially when they were supposed to do so after a very short period of training.

7. Insufficient network conditions for online teaching and learning as this required a large amount of data transmission and thus relied heavily on the wi-fi infrastructure. This was expensive for students, too. If a flaw occured in one segment, the whole online class had to stop.

8. The possible poor class management during online teaching. Since the teacher and students were not in one actual room during online teaching, class management became more challenging. The instructors could not be able to observe the students to give adequate feedback. The inefficiency in class

management might lead to students' unsatisfactory learning outcomes.

9. Much of the learning was completed asynchronously and students often felt disconnected from their instructor, as well as their peers. It could be difficult for instructors to teach online when they struggled to know how students were comprehending course content, and whether they were participating or not in learning experience.

10.   online teaching could turn some students into passive learners. Those passive students might acquire the lecture content and pass their exams, but they were not able to apply their learnings outside the online classroom or make connections with previously learned material. That was because they needed numerous interactions with new material in order to fully digest and absorb it.

11.   collaboration was difficult to achieve when students were not physically present together.

Facing the challenges

To overcome and face these challenges, and to answer the third question related   to the extent to which language staff members can cope with the pandemic requirements for EFL online teaching., the researcher presents some solutions:

The participants learned how to use various internet platforms for online teaching, and some chat groups in social networking apps These platforms and apps have been developing fast since the outbreak of COVID-19. Through attempts and trials, they got familiar with their functions including live streaming, uploading, and

downloading files. They were also aware of the advantages and disadvantages of each platform and app. The ability to make a choice of suitable online platform(s) prepared them for online EFL teaching and enhanced their confidence in information technology for online teaching.

As for **class management**, participants could sort the students into learning groups of four or five. This worked well as it kept every student engaged in learning activities. The sharing and feedback encouraged the students to continuously perform   better.

For **how to engage students**, the instructor needed to understand that online learning has a lot of advantages with respect to tools and interesting platforms to engage students in learning. H/she tried to include those tools and various types of learning approaches such as podcasts, videos (teaching channel, own videos, live classes), discussions, various forms of text through articles and blogs, different assessment methods (tests, quizzes, assignments and projects) learning activities and collaboration for better learning outcomes.

For **time commitment**, the instructor had to use a friendly tone for communicating with his students to establish rapport. He could set reminders for assignments and projects and send them to his students one week prior to submission.

To overcome the challenge related to **assessment**, the instructor had to understand the type of questions students might ask. He should make sure that he gave proper

assignments and conducted tests at regular intervals. This could help him to assess them according to their performance.

As for **giving online feedback**, the instructor should understand how important it is to give feedback for the students for their growth and improvement. He should be keen to provide personalized guidance to all the students so that they could work on their learning abilities.

The challenge related to the **teaching methods**, the instructors should   find out different kinds of tools that make teaching and assessment simple and easy. They could think of many teaching methods that could improve students' learning such as conducting different activities, model making, debates, group activities, virtual tours, group discussions, **role play** etc.

Some instructors had fears of **online cheating**. Therefore, they should allow students to take exams according to their needs. They should not force them for assignments or any tests unless they were ready.

When becoming helpless if something with **technical errors** happened in the middle of the live session or during communicating with students, the instructor should contact technical support for solving problems that could cause hindrance in the learning process. He should be sure to upgrade the computer with apps and software that could help in an effective learning process with a high-speed internet connection.

As for the **course content**, the instructor had to understand the course content and how to fit it into the online course. He should modify the content, the activities and assignments for a better understanding of the concepts.

In the light of all these challenges, Scanlon (2020) commented saying that "For those who have access to the right technology, there is evidence that learning online can be more effective in a number of ways. Some research shows that on average, students retain 25-60% more material when learning online compared to only 8-10% in a classroom. This is mostly due to the students being able to learn faster online; e-learning requires 40-60% less time to learn than in a traditional classroom setting because students can learn at their own pace, going back and re-reading, skipping, or accelerating through concepts as they choose.

Conclusions

This qualitative inquiry was set up to examine TEFL staff members practices of online teaching in response to their disrupted teaching plans, and how they acquired their IT literacy in the initial stage of the COVID-19 outbreak. Such research on staff members' practices of online teaching during COVID-19 and the findings have theoretical implications for research on online EFL teaching and on teacher practices. It has increased the knowledge about online EFL teaching by focusing on what members think and believe about online EFL teaching. The qualitative method adopted in the present study copes with the existing trend in foreign language research.

This study has also provided new empirical evidence for research on teacher practices of online EFL teaching because the

findings related to teachers' perception of the features, advantages, and weaknesses of online EFL teaching are new to the field of language teacher research. The findings from the present study might also have implications for EFL teachers. These findings also illustrate that research on language teacher needs to be further investigated with reference to specific contexts. Hopefully, these findings can help EFL teachers to understand that language teaching is an endeavor full of complexities and unexpected events. Language teachers need to be flexible, and ready to learn new skills for overcoming unexpected challenges such as COVID-19.

However, this study has also its limitation: COVID-19 imposed challenges to both teachers and students. Future research might consider including data from students' perspectives for a more generalizable and holistic study. Teachers' personal experiences such as birthplaces, schooling, and professional coursework may lead to differences in their perception about online EFL teaching. Meanwhile, students' perception about online EFL teaching and learning collected through interviews and/or other data collection instruments would provide feedback to teachers and facilitate their perception about EFL teaching, especially online teaching of EFL to students in similar contexts.

Recommendations

- For a successful online teaching in higher education that considers the social distance measure among people during the pandemic of COVID-19, online leaening and teaching can be used to enhance communication between the instructor and the students as well as among students themselves

- Online teaching is a tool for enabling video communications, video and audio conferencing, chats and webinars.
- ESL teachers, stakeholders, policy makers, and institutions can benefit from the results of the study and come out with practical strategies to utilize online sources for education in the pandemic situation.

Suggestions

Here are some suggestions for possible further research:

- The Effect of online learning on students' EFL Reading Skills at faculties of Education.
- The Impact of online learning on Improving the English Majors' Speaking and Writing Skills at the Faculty of Education.
- Replicating the current study on:
    - ➢ Developing the English Listening Skills among English majors at the Faculty of Education.
    - ➢ Enhancing the English Reading Skills among Students of English specific programs at the Faculty of Education.
- Creating a smart environment for home-based teaching and learning, choosing suitable online teaching modes, and enhancing interaction in online teaching.

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