

The reality of online education at Tlemcen university during the Covid-19 Pandemic from the teachers' perspective

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Abstract

COVID-19 has impacted the educational field in so many ways and created many challenges for both learners and teachers. Consequently, Algerian universities have been compelled to switch to online education to cope with the current situation. Teachers started using a variety of strategies and also several platforms and tools like ICTs, tablets, smartphones, Zoom, Google Meet, Teams, and Moodle, among others. This study aimed to shed light on the experience of some teachers at Tlemcen University the study will deal with the most significant changes in education triggered by the pandemic that will affect education even after COVID-19. An online questionnaire was distributed to 36 teachers at Tlemcen University. Most teachers complained that they had to combine online and onsite courses (hybrid teaching) as it was tiring, time, and energy-consuming

Keywords: online education, Covid 19, platforms, strategies, internet

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1. Introduction

Since the end of the year 2019, teachers all around Algeria and the whole world have faced challenges and problems due to the outbreak of the Pandemic of COVID-19 (Basilaia & Kvavadze, 2020). Schools, colleges, and institutions decided to stop onsite teaching and shift to online. This shift to distance teaching caused disruptions for educators, pupils, and parents alike. People were obliged to stay home as part of the lockdown.

However, even when teachers and learners adjusted to the new situation, they faced other issues, such as internet glitches, connectivity issues, lack of preparation and resources, etc. Adopting online teaching seemed temporary, but as the situation worsened, some institutions considered replacing onsite instruction with online one (Lo, 2023; Nguyen & Kember 2024). Switching to online education has also led to several dropout students (Rahmani et al., 2024).

When students were asked what they missed the most about traditional classrooms, they replied that the affective side was missing physical interaction. Others said that using standard tools like chalk, the board, handouts, and books is far better than technology. In addition, some teachers stressed the importance of eye contact and the ability to get more active students who ask questions when needed. Both communication and reactivity are essential for the learning atmosphere (Peters et al., 2020). Another vital aspect is the V.A.K. T or Visual, Auditory, Kinesthetic, and Tactile framework. All these elements, especially body language, enrich learning and teaching.

Teachers needed help to provide continuous instruction via the combination of in-person, virtual, and hybrid learning modes. In addition, there were many issues related to internet connectivity, especially for teachers and learners who live in remote areas (Koh et al., 2023). Also, teachers found it hard to get students' attention while they were in their rooms. Using laptops or phones to study gives way to other distractions since students have access to other applications and websites (Sułkowski, 2020; Tian, Zheng & Chao, 2020). Thus, learners lose focus quickly. Moreover, some teachers complained about other problems like technical issues, internet glitches, loss of passwords provided by the university, and the difficulty of creating a YouTube channel that requires a strong connection.

Most teachers also said learners needed to be more motivated to study online. Additionally, it took a lot of work to get their message across, mainly because of the lack of communication and eye contact. Some of them also claimed that it was challenging to convince their learners to attend lectures online, involve them, and capture their attention.

1.1. Purpose of study

This study aimed to shed light on the experience of some teachers at Tlemcen University the study will deal with the most significant changes in education triggered by the pandemic that will affect education even after COVID-19.

2. Methods and materials

2.1. Participants

The study included 36 Tlemcen University faculty members, who were selected based on their qualifications and experience in language studies and translation. These individuals were chosen for the translation-related academic programs at the university because of their noteworthy contributions to curriculum development, research, and student instruction. For a thorough grasp of the skills needed by translators in an academic setting, their perspectives were deemed essential.

2.2. Data collection instrument

An online survey was distributed to 36 Tlemcen University faculty members to obtain information about the competencies needed by translators from the viewpoint of academic professionals.

2.3. Ethical consideration

Participants received comprehensive information about the study's objectives, the fact that their participation was voluntary, and the confidentiality safeguards in place to protect their identity. Before beginning any research activity, each participant gave their informed consent, guaranteeing that they were completely aware of the advantages and potential hazards of participating.

3. Results

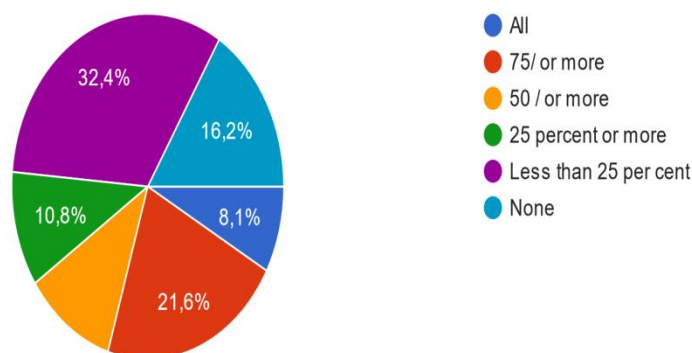
One of the biggest challenges is that teachers need to be fully trained by their institutions, and some educators need to gain prior experience with distance teaching. Thirty-four percent of the participants said less than 25 percent were trained to teach online, while 21.6 percent claimed 75 percent or more. However, only 8.1 percent said that all teachers received training (Figure 1).

Figure 1

Training needs of teachers

Which percentage of teachers at your institution had experience with online/distance teaching and learning prior to Covid 19?

37 réponses



3.1. Means, tools, and platforms used for distance teaching

ICT, which means Internet, Computer, and Technology. Moreover, students started using their smartphones and tablets to learn. Of course, distance teaching was made easier thanks to tools and platforms such as Zoom, Google Meet, Moodle, and Teams (Almahasees et al., 2021; Contrino et al., 2024). Additionally, some teachers created Facebook pages and messenger groups to connect with their learners. Still, some educators created YouTube channels to give lectures and share presentations with their students.

3.2. Strategies used in online classes by English language teachers

Most teachers who took the questionnaire said that they prepared their lectures and sent them as PDFs to their learners before the course was online. This enabled students to keep focus and understand lectures easily. They also presented their lectures using PPT presentations and gave summaries of lectures to facilitate learning. Some teachers would ask questions in the middle of the lecture to check if their learners were on track. Of course, online teaching has imposed specific parameters on educators, so some of them shared their screens and read directly.

To present their lectures online, some teachers chose to use a good warm-up, an icebreaker, and exciting presentations with pictures to catch the attention of their learners. They would avoid talking throughout the whole online session; instead, they decided to give their learners time to participate and elicit the maximum of their answers, whether written or spoken.

Another strategy used by educators was the use of various platforms and applications. Several platforms like Teams, Zoom, and Moodle were used at Tlemcen University. However, some teachers claimed that these tools used to teach online remain teacher-centered rather than learner-centered.

3.3. Activities that were stopped during Covid 19

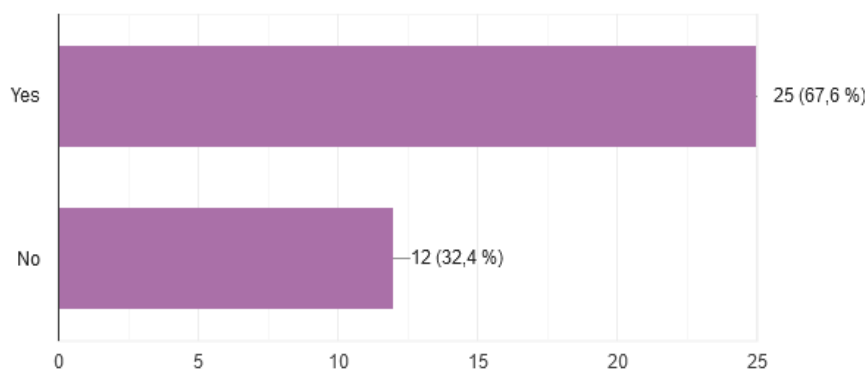
First, vivas were stopped, and teachers only read their supervisees' works, sending the dissertations to jury members who would agree on a final grade. However, gradually vivas reappeared again, but they were held only online and replaced onsite ones. In addition, lectures were reduced to one hour for each module instead of an hour and a half. Moreover, club activities and discussions were canceled, and public speaking and meetings were stopped. Last but not least, deliberations were done most of the time were done online. Figure 2 shows responses about activities that were stopped during Covid 19.

Figure 2

Activities that were stopped during Covid 19

Have certain activities been completely stopped and will resume after the end of the pandemic? If yes, specify

37 réponses



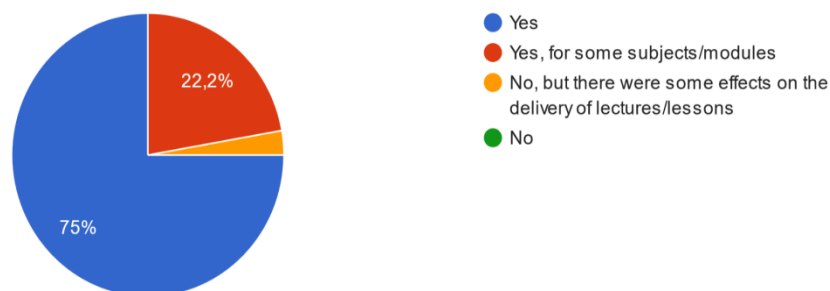
Some activities were canceled, while others were only reduced. For example, instead of twelve sessions before the Pandemic, students studied only for six weeks, with an hour for each session instead of an hour and a half. Moreover, many teachers stopped giving their learners tests and preferred to provide them with projects or videos. However, the online assessment was even more challenging. Figure 3 shows changes in institutions during Covid-19.

Figure 3

Changes in institutions during Covid 19

Has your institution changed the curricula and hours of exposure due to Covid19 pandemic?

36 réponses



4. Discussion

According to educators, many lectures would still be online after the Pandemic. Of course, these lectures were adjusted according to the hours of exposure and learners' motivation, which was getting limited over time. Another change is the use of ICTs, which were of great help and had many advantages but were not without drawbacks (Naciri, Baba, Achbani & Kharbach, 2020). It made students lazy, and cheating was more accessible than ever before.

One advantage of ICT and online teaching is that learners can attend classes without moving, going out, spending money, or commuting. However, technology can never replace a teacher. As a result, several elements were missing, such as eye contact, rapport, interaction, face-to-face discussions, timing and sub-groups, honest assessment, class management, and teacher-student rapport.

Of course, after spending two years, most educators got used to teaching online. Gradually, onsite and standard classes were reintroduced, but this time through waves to avoid overcrowded classes and meetings and, of course, concerning security and distance measures. However, most teachers complained that they had to combine online and onsite courses (hybrid teaching) as it was tiring, time, and energy-consuming.

5. Conclusion

It is challenging to cope with the situation, and switching to online or hybrid teaching is one of the most difficult missions that English teachers face at Tlemcen University and worldwide. What follows are tips or advice to improve teaching English online. First, teachers must compete with the mass distraction (different applications, social media, messages, etc.). They also have to stick to the essentials; they can still review previous ideas and lectures, design activities and tasks, and respect gradation, i.e., go from the easiest to the most difficult. It is also highly advisable to use visual aids while teaching, like a catchy PowerPoint Presentation, to keep their focus during the lecture.

Teachers should create an agenda or plan their lectures and share them with their students before each online session. It is also crucial for educators to clearly explain the etiquette that students should follow during online courses and what is expected from them before or at the beginning of online lectures. In addition, teachers are required to mute all microphones except for the one who is speaking, and this helps avoid distracting noises and retain the focus of learners. Students can raise their hands if they wish to participate, speak, or ask questions. Otherwise, they can write in the discussion chat room without disturbing or interrupting their teacher.

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