



The post-pandemic intentions of EFL lecturers towards online language teaching

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Suggested Citation:

Rahimi, A.R. & Mosali, Z. (2024). The post-pandemic intentions of EFL lecturers towards online language teaching. *World Journal on Educational Technology: Current Issues* 16(2), 85-102. <https://doi.org/10.18844/wjet.v16i2.9001>

Received on October 21, 2023; revised on January 28, 2024; accepted on March 19, 2024.

Selection and peer review under the responsibility of *Prof. Dr. Huseyin Uzunboylu*, University of Kyrenia, Cyprus
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Abstract

After the widespread transition to Emergency Remote Language Teaching, there is a need to investigate teachers' continued intention toward online language teaching post-pandemic. Thus, DeLone and McLean's model of information systems success was used to investigate university lecturers' attitudes toward OLT during the post-pandemic period. The maximum variation sampling was conducted on fourteen university lecturers from various cities in Iran. A three-phase interview protocol was developed and applied to the participants. The data was analyzed with content analysis. The result of the deductive content analysis showed that OLT helped university instructors overcome technophobia and become experts in it. However, OLT had some health hazards for lecturers and led students to passive learning. Furthermore, the lack of technical, financial, and professional support from the administrators affected OLT service quality. Moreover, participants would have blended and flipped language teaching during the post-pandemic, based on learners' levels and psychological factors. Among many implications, the study suggests more teacher training workshops for university lecturers to overcome technophobia.

Keywords: DeLone and McLean information systems success model; EFL teachers; Online Language Teaching; Post-pandemic.

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1. INTRODUCTION

By dint of the COVID-19 outbreak, many countries have been urged to take some precautions in every aspect, particularly in education (Cheng & Liu 2024). According to the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO, 2020), 190 countries have been driven to transition from face-to-face instruction to online education. It has its specific design, assessment, and teaching strategies (Khlaif et al., 2021), particularly in language teaching. To prevent the spread of the virus, many institutions were compelled to suspend their face-to-face teaching to lessen the physical contact between the staff and students. This change had already progressed during the pre-pandemic as scholars maintained that the teaching model based on classroom interaction was outdated (Panadero et al., 2022). Watermeyer et al., (2020) claim that the hallmark of online language teaching (OLT) is the affection arising from the complete transition to online provision and a low level of digital competency. It brings about unforeseen challenges for students, teachers, families, stakeholders, and institutions (Liu, 2024).

Several countries around the world have experienced multiple challenges as a result of the sudden move to Emergency Remote Language Teaching (ERLT), (Jin et al., 2021, MacIntyre et al., 2020; Dos Santos, 2022). This required teachers' attitudes to cope with the new mode(s) of delivery (Rahimi & Tafazoli 2022b; Taghizadeh & Basirat, 2022). The implementation of OLT in developing countries such as Iran, the context of this study, has been particularly difficult due to several policy, personal, and infrastructure constraints (Badrkhani, 2021; Taghizadeh & Basirat, 2022).

There was a need for language teachers to adapt themselves to new methods of delivery with which they had no prior experience; Despite this, research has revealed that perceptions and attitudes are the pre-requisites to integrating Information communication technologies (ICT) (Rahimi & Tafazoli, 2022b; El-Henawy, 2023; Nguyen et al., 2024). Until the pandemic is definitively ended, the future of education remains uncertain. It is possible to exploit Computer-Assisted-Language-Learning (CALL) to support agile language learning and teaching models and enable teachers to perform more effectively in the post-pandemic era due to the use of OLT (Kaiqi & Kutuk 2024). According to Leask and Younie (2022), technology allows us to "do education differently" both during and after the COVID-19 epidemic.

In the aftermath of the pandemic, it remains unclear whether language teachers intend to continue the OLT. Even though OLT might be repealed when the COVID-19 situation improves, it plays a vital role in the future of language education. Further, in the coming years, new forms of language teaching and learning may emerge due to rapid advancements in CALL, and ICT, requiring educators to predict their technological, pedagogical, professional, and personal, behaviors. To inform practice for the post-pandemic and in similar emergencies and to cope with uncertainties that may arise, it would be beneficial to gain a deeper understanding of what enables lecturers to continue their intention to utilize OLT during the post-pandemic. Accordingly, there are growing appeals for evaluating the users' experience and attitudes towards OLT to disclose the design of well-planned OLT for the future (Al Shlowiy et al., 2021; Oliveira et al., 2021; Yan et al., 2021), particularly for the post-pandemic, and in the Iranian EFL context (Taghizadeh & Basirat, 2022).

Aside from this, there is a question regarding whether online platforms for teaching will revolutionize the education sector or are they just imposed applications. The extent to which teachers are interested or satisfied with the numerous benefits of online classes or whether they are troubled by the emerging problems. We are skeptical about the possibility of online platforms replacing traditional classrooms entirely or partially after COVID-19, which strongly relies on teachers' attitudes. This study intends to provide a better understanding of the online education reforms to prepare for the post-pandemic period from the standpoint of language lectures because, rather than waiting for normality to return, the

educational system must undergo significant transformation, preparation, and updating by administrators, including technological, pedagogical, psychological, and other contextual factors.

1.1. Literature review

Information Systems (IS) can be an individual or organization that develops a target technology to be utilized by society members (Çelik & Ayaz, 2021). It intends to support, maintain, and control IS tools to help managers, employers, and users reach their target objectives. In 1992, DeLone and McLean developed a model to measure IS success (DIMIS) within their organization based on Mason's (1978) expansion of the influence level within six factors (DeLone & McLean, 1992). Later, DeLone and McLean revised their model by incorporating five factors (DeLone & McLean, 2003).

Based on recent systematic and integrative reviews of technology acceptance models, most studies emphasized the importance of extending, expanding, and utilizing the technology acceptance model (TAM), theory of planned behavior (TPB), and unified theory of acceptance and use of technology (Granić, 2022). Researchers also recommended incorporating other theoretical approaches to broaden the scope of these models across educational fields and contexts (Al-Nuaimi & Al-Emran, 2021). Moreover, DIMIS emphasizes the performance and impact of the target system after use (Doleck et al., 2019; Sabeih et al., 2021), which is appropriate for the post-pandemic era, and the current study. Accordingly, we adopted this model based on the research context and objectives and defined the theoretical model (DeLone & McLean, 2003) as follows:

- *System quality* alludes to the negative and positive usability aspects and characteristics of OLT after using it.
- *Information quality* focuses on the quality aspects of the output governed by OLT.
- *Service quality* refers to the quality of support the managers and system developers provided for university teachers during OLT.
- *User satisfaction* concentrates on university lecturers' overall attitudes towards OLT and explores their tendency to apply OLT for the post-pandemic.
- *The net benefit* is known as the most critical factor of DIMIS success (DeLone & McLean, 2003) as it explores the effect of OLT on organizational and individual aspects.

1.1.1. Teachers' attitudes toward online teaching during Covid-19

The Covid-19 pandemic, which began in 2019, presented unexpected challenges to academic institutions and universities around the world. A large number of instructors faced a significant challenge during the first few months of teaching English online and had to learn how to work with modern technologies that they had never used before. A large-scale cross-cultural study indicated that most English teachers in secondary schools, as well as tertiary education, face a variety of emergency remote teaching challenges, including assessing student academic progress, obtaining internet access and digital devices, dealing with technology illiterate students, dealing with demotivated students, and communicating with family members, in a subsequent cross-cultural research report, MacIntyre et al., (2020) found that the main challenges of ERLT for language teachers at higher education were the family and personal health, and balancing work and home responsibilities. By applying the extended model of DIMIS in the Saudian context, Alotaibi and Alshahrani (2022) reported that the students' engagements, service, and system quality shaped their positive attitudes toward OLT.

Several challenges and opportunities associated with remote language teaching have also been identified in country-specific studies. Among these factors are: inexperience teaching English with ICT

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(Badrkhani, 2021; Mousavi et al., 2021), poor classroom interaction (Ghanbari & Nowroozi., 2022), working-from-home limitations and distractions (Mousavi et al., 2021; Taghizadeh & Basirat, 2022), evaluation of language learners' performance (Mashhadlou & Izadpanah, 2021), being bored, not motivated, and neglecting their responsibilities (Mousavi et al., 2021; Taghizadeh & Basirat, 2022), and the prohibitive costs of technological devices and limited Internet access (Rahimi & Atefi Boroujeni, 2022; Taghizadeh & Basirat, 2022).

On the other side, ERLT has the benefits of flexibility, including both the time and place for language instruction (Mashhadlou & Izadpanah, 2021), addressing both receptive and productive language skills (Mousavi et al., 2021; Taghizadeh & Basirat, 2022), improving digital competence and technological proficiency (Badrkhani, 2021; Mousavi et al., 2021), sharing authentic materials (Mousavi et al., 2021; Taghizadeh & Basirat, 2022), keeping the environment safe from pollution (Rahimi & Atefi Boroujeni, 2022; Taghizadeh & Basirat, 2022), and creating reusable content (Badrkhani, 2021; Mousavi et al., 2021) were reported as positive aspects of OLT by the recent international and local studies.

1.1.2. Teachers' attitudes toward online teaching during post Covid-19

During the post-pandemic period, a few studies have also examined teachers' intentions regarding online teaching. As an instance, the findings of Bajaj et al., (2021) based on the TAM model have shown that the ease of use of online platforms significantly impacted teachers continued use of them during the post-pandemic. Similarly, Khong et al., (2022) developed their conceptual model based on technological pedagogical content knowledge (TPACK) and TAM to examine instructors' continued intentions related to online teaching during the post-pandemic phase. They reported that teachers' professional knowledge and support from administrators shaped their attitudes toward online teaching during the post-pandemic.

1.2. Purpose of study

Despite the insights gained from these previous studies, some research gaps remain from the perspective of three areas:

- Online language teaching: Recent international and national studies examined teachers' attitudes towards ERLT and OLT during the early stages of the pandemic, in which educators were obliged to teach English online due to a lack of other options during that period. During the post-pandemic period, some educators could utilize OLT, face-to-face sessions, or a blended form of teaching.
- International and local gaps: Recent international studies have explored teachers' attitudes toward online teaching in India (Bajaj et al., 2021) and Vietnam (Khong et al., 2022) during the post-pandemic period, what is neglected in the Iranian EFL context, and language teaching.
- Educational technology: Recent studies such as Khong et al., (2022) and Bajaj et al. (2021) selected TAM as their theoretical framework for exploring teachers' continuing intentions toward online teaching. Moreover, previous systematic and integrative reviews also highlighted that TAM, TPB, and UTULT were the most broadly used models to explore teachers' attitudes toward the integration of ICT in their classrooms (Granić, 2022; Al-Nuaimi & Al-Emran, 2021; Doleck et al., 2019; Sabeh et al., 2021); what needs to be applied is the DIMIS model to increase its predictive power to other contexts and disciplines.

Based on these gaps, the researchers developed the following research question:

RQ: What are the Iranian EFL lectures' continued intentions towards online language teaching during the post-pandemic?

2. METHODS AND MATERIALS

2.1. Research design

This study explored Iranian lecturers' continued intentions towards OLT for the post-pandemic. Hence, the phenomenological approach was appropriate as it allows researchers to identify the essence of human experience about a phenomenon they have encountered. In phenomenology, two major approaches are recognized: hermeneutic phenomenology and transcendental phenomenology (TPA) (Moerer-Urdahl & Creswell, 2004). TPA is a science of meaning and a method of acquiring and collecting data that is crucial to understanding the world and making sense of the human experience (Moustakas, 1994). The goal of hermeneutics is to gain a deeper understanding of a work of literature or historical investigation through a reflective interpretation (Moustakas, 1994). The researchers utilized this method to identify the essence of the human experience of a phenomenon as described by participants (Moustakas, 1994). Such experiences could have happened in Iranian language lectures during the online language teaching and led scholars to their belief, also TPA design places greater emphasis on the description of participants than the description of researchers. To this end, the researchers withdraw themselves from the study to focus on the phenomenon through the experiences of the participants and attitudes toward OLT in the post-pandemic era (Creswell & Poth, 2016). In this respect, the transcendental (TPA) provided the basis for this study.

2.2. Data collection instrument

Data were collected during the fall semester of the academic year 2022. A three-phase interview protocol was developed by the researchers Castillo-Montoya (2016). 1. Ensuring interview questions align with research questions, 2. Receiving feedback on interview protocols. 3. Piloting the interview protocol. In the first phase, the study framework was used to develop interview questions, and those questions were checked to ensure they aligned with participants' lived experiences (OLT), background information, and the study objectives. Second, we established the face and content validity of the instrument by reviewing and providing feedback to four experts from the fields of English Language Teaching (ELT), CALL, and psycholinguistics (Bolarinwa, 2015). As a final step, a questionnaire for the interview was developed based on the feedback received from the panels, and the second researcher piloted the questionnaire with two participants who were similar to those who participated in the study.

2.3. Participants

After developing our instrument, the second researcher distributed the agenda for the data collection to 22 university lecturers she was acquainted with. To collect rich data, purposeful sampling was utilized in the form of maximum variation sampling. An important purpose of maximum variation sampling is 'to capture major variations' even though a common core... may also emerge in the analysis' (Patton, 2002). The maximum variation sampling method is useful for examining variations in the manifestations of a phenomenon since it allows for the examination of any key factors in various contexts (Suri., 2011). Consequently, 14 university instructors were recruited based on the following criteria (all of the participants were varied regarding their language teaching experience with and without online platforms, genders, and small and big contexts): 1. All of the participants had a post-graduate degree in ELT, including eight Ph.D. and six MA holders. 2. They have been teaching English for various university degrees. 3. They had language teaching experiences ranging from three to ten years. 4. They had experienced OLT ranging from one to three years. 5. They taught English via different platforms. 6. They had seven females and males. 7. They have been teaching English at universities both in small and in big cities. Using these criteria, we can elevate the study in terms of its representativeness, generalizability, and transferability to other relevant contexts. Table 1 displays the demographic characteristics of the participants.

Table 1
Participants' Demographic Information.

Code	Gender	Age	Degree	Level of teaching	City	Teaching experience (Year)	Experience in online language teaching	Platforms
T1	Male	28	MA	BA	Ardabil	5	2	Adobe Connect
T2	Female	32	MA	BA	Meshkinshar	6	1	Learning Management System (LMS)
T3	Female	32	PhD	MA PhD	Mashhad	7	2	Adobe Connect
T4	Female	26	MA	BA	Ardabil	3	3	Adobe Connect
T5	Male	31	PhD.	BA	Kivi	4	1	bigbluebutton
T6	Male	31	M.A	BA	Meshkinshar	5	1	Googlemeet
T7	Female	39	PhD	PhD	Ardabil	7	2	bigbluebutton
T8	Female	35	PhD	PhD.	Tehran	5	2	Whatsapp
T9	Male	28	PhD	BA	Ardabil	2	1	LMS
T10	Male	30	PhD	BA	Meshkinshar	3	1	LMS
T11	Male	27	MA	MA	Kivi	2	1	LMS
T12	Male	29	PhD	MA	Tehran	5	3	LMS
T13	Female	33	MA	MA PhD	Tehran	9	2	Adobe Connect
T14	Female	41	PhD	PhD M.A BA	Tehran	10	2	Skype

2.4. Ethics and Consent Statement

After selecting the participants based on the sampling criteria, the second researcher sent out an email to the participants to inform them about the purpose of the research and why they were selected for this study. Moreover, she assured them that all the information they would share with the researchers would remain anonymous to the researchers only. Also, the second researcher highlighted that their identity and personal information would remain confidential. All of them signed the consent forms before being interviewed.

2.5. Data collection procedure

Data for this phenomenological study was gathered through semi-structured interviews which is suitable for qualitative research in a few cases (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). It helps researchers reach the thick data and uncover participants' attitudes, experiences, and opinions toward the target phenomenon (Creswell, 2020). Based on the study objective, the researchers developed some open-ended questions in advance of the interview sessions. The second researcher conducted interview sessions with the participants through WhatsApp and face-to-face. She attempted to establish a friendly atmosphere and clarify the interviewees' statements and ideas by asking follow-up questions. It is noteworthy that she recorded the entire interview during the interview and put her phone in airplane mode. Moreover, the interviewer informed all participants that they could use English and Persian. Overall, the interview sessions lasted 40 to 70 minutes until we reached data saturation.

More specifically, to reach data saturation, the following steps were taken. During the interview, the second researcher applied a saturation grid method suggested by Brod et al., (2009); 1. she listed major topics and objects on the page, marked them during the interview, and continued the interview until the

interviewee repeated the same findings to her (Saunders et al., 2017). 2. She applied "probing questions and creating a state of epoché in a phenomenological study design will assist the researcher in the quest for data saturation" (Fusch & Ness, 2015). For clarification, the interviewer asked basic probing questions such as, "Do you like OLT?" Then based on every response, she asked another question such as "Why do you like/dislike OLT?" "What do you mean by that?" "In what aspect does OLT have positive or negative effects?" "Is it possible to tell me in what aspects OLT had positive effects?" "Why does it have a positive effect on learners' psychological factors?" 3. Each interview session was transcribed by her and sent to the first researcher who then analyzed the data according to deductive content analysis. The researchers concluded that no further information, codes, or themes could be derived from this participant after each analysis (Guest et al., 2006). Upon finding a new theme and code, the second researcher continued to collect data and repeated the same procedure to ensure that other findings were not elicited from this participant (Fusch & Ness, 2015).

2.6. Data analysis

The data were imported to MAXQDA (20.0). Also, Braun and Clarke's (2006) guidelines were adapted for reflective thematic context analysis. Firstly, the second researcher transcribed the interview and sent it to the first researcher. The first researcher read and reread the transcription to gain a better understanding of the data. He then theoretically coded the data within the study framework. Using the study framework, potential themes for each code were developed. The data was then sent to a second researcher for inspection to determine the relationships between the codes and the themes. Once the relationship between codes and themes was established, the names of each theme were selected and the code map was provided. To reach inter-coder reliability, three experts checked and reviewed the data analysis process (Creswell, 2014). Lastly, the findings of the study are reported in the next section. Figures 1 and 2 display the data analysis process and thematic code map.

Figure 1

Data Analysis Process.

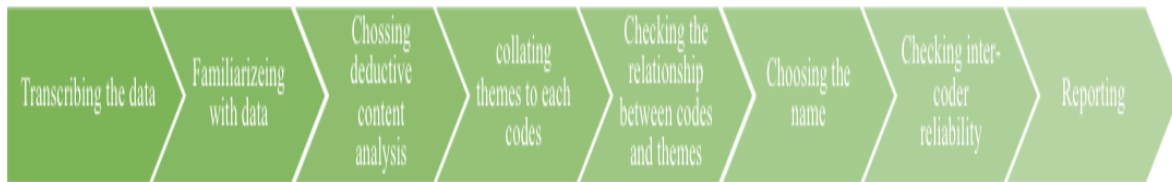
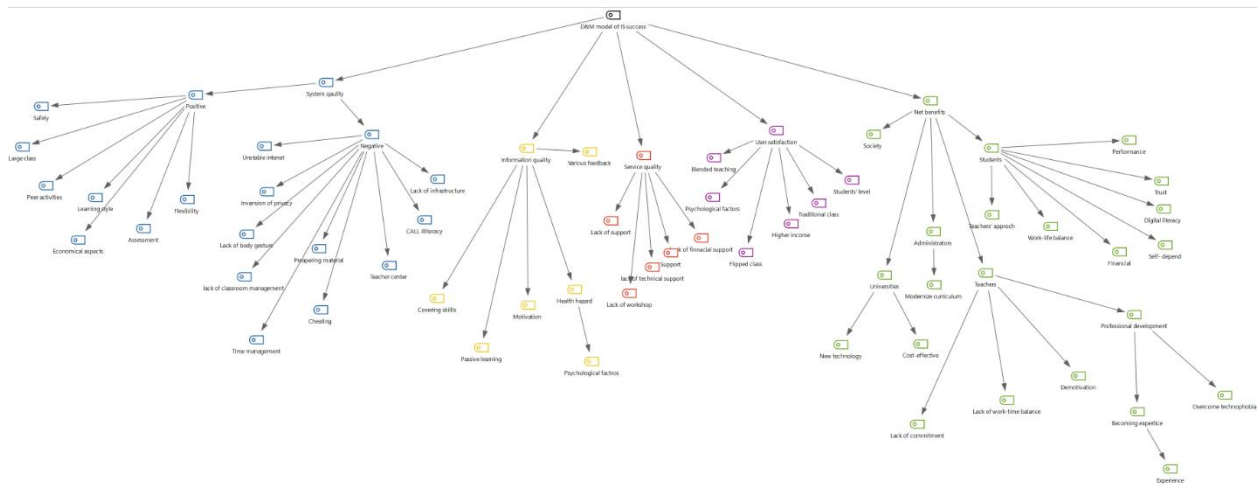


Figure 2
The Thematic Map Codes



2.7. Reliability and validity

To judge the trustworthiness of the data, four criteria of credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability were met (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). To ensure credibility, the second researcher continued her data gathering until she reached data repetition (Saunders et al., 2017). To reach dependability, we applied member checking by selecting four participants and giving them their transcription to recognize which data related to them (Birt et al., 2016). For transferability, maximum variation sampling was applied in which our participants had different characteristics, including teaching experiences during OLT, contexts, and levels (Ary et al., 2018). Finally, three researchers checked the results and study data to meet the confirmability (Creswell, 2014).

3. RESULTS

3.1. System quality

As mentioned earlier, system quality exhibits the positive and negative features of OLT. Thus, the participants in the present study noted that OLT provided them with a flexible teaching environment where they could teach anywhere, at any time. It is important to note that not only did OLT boost lecturers' motivation by eliminating the need to waste time, money, or energy traveling to the workplace, but it also provided both students and teachers with a safe environment in which to maintain their health and minimize face-to-face interaction. As noted by [T11] *"We stay at home and be safe and save time. I mean, you no longer need to waste your time getting dressed and commuting to institutes, and it is more cost-effective. Moreover, there was no boundary and limit for us to participate in different classes"* Similarly, [T3] claimed that

"During the pre-corona students were full of sweat as soon as they arrived at the classes because of the hot and cold weather. They are stuck in traffic jams and lots of other problems on their way. However, during the remote education, they had little face-to-face communication with each other."

Additionally, OLT provided opportunities for university instructors to provide online instruction to a large number of students. In this sense, [T1] asserted *“you can have 100 or 200 students in the class, so there is no limit in terms of the number of students”*. Further, university instructors found OLT to be extremely helpful for engaging their shy and passive language learners. As an illustration, [T3] maintained, *that some learners in real language classes are passive because of their shyness. In online language classes, they get the courage to speak without seeing their face and their mistakes while they are speaking.*

Another positive aspect of OLT was covering language learners' learning styles and helping instructors have peer activities. [T7] stated that *when you assigned language learners to different groups to do activities in different places, there was no voice in each breakout room, so, they could only hear their peers in that room with three or four students in it.* Moreover, [T9] claimed, *that you can use lots of visual and graphic language teaching materials and students learn vocabulary and concepts better and it is especially useful for individuals with iconic memory.* For clarification, [T4] mentioned, *it increases students cheating. In answering questions, they could open the book if they had the pdf file and they could search for answers.* Also, [T3] claimed, *in Mashhad, there were some power cuts at different times and the electricity went out.”* [T2] said, *that the body language of teachers can convey lots of meaning to students indirectly and they are absent in OLT classes.* Similarly, [T7] addressed that *many language teachers using online classes were not familiar even with CALL.* [T10] asserted that *we didn't have personal privacy and students might see or hear what we didn't want, they could see our house and family members when we had problems in our house.* Furthermore, [T3] expressed, *that there was an internet connection problem; they kept complaining about the quality of my voice.*

In addition, participants noted that they were unable to effectively manage their classrooms and that the preparation of their online language teaching materials took more time. For instance, [T5] said, *creating online materials was time-consuming. In face-to-face classes, I don't spend so much time on this purpose.* Furthermore, OLT adversely affected the participants' social lives as they were unable to maintain a work-life balance. In this line [T3] said *it was boring to be at home for long hours, and there was a mix, I cooked, I did housework, and at the same time I taught and I didn't control my class and my students.*

3.2. Information quality

Regarding the information quality of OLT, the content analysis displayed that OLT had both positive and negative influences on the output of teaching procedure, health, and higher educators' language teaching skills. Firstly, it led language learners to be passive. For clarification, [T13] mentioned *the students who were active in face-to-face classes, became somehow passive in online classes due to a lack of eye contact with their teacher, weak participation, and inability to communicate with their classmates.* Also, teachers claimed that they were unable to cover all language skills as [T6] asserted that *it was complicated for me to cover all skills and subskills in my online language classrooms, particularly writing skills.* Moreover, several health problems plagued them, such as headaches and poor eyesight. As [T5] mentioned, *“another negative point was poor eyesight for teachers and students and increased overweight. We had to use hands-free all the time. It reduces your hearing”*. OLT also can demotivate them about teaching since [T2] determined that *the way that I was supposed to control and manage online classes demotivated me.* It was mentioned by several participants that their university students were dissatisfied with the online language learning environment. By way of example, [T7] asserted that *many students didn't study and many of them said that they don't like the way professors are teaching.* On the other hand, OLT had a positive influence on university learners' and professors' motivation, as [T3] announced:

By saving energy and time, teachers and learners can be highly motivated with physical energy to participate in classes, to cope with different tasks. It makes them more energetic and more prepared

for class without any stress, commuting home and class, class places, or institutes. Additionally, participants said that they could engage their students by providing various feedbacks. For instance, [T10] declared:

“There was feedback on social networks, also checking homework, and interacting with students expanded our social networks tools. This means that students themselves received feedback through social media, which was a kind of delayed, indirect feedback for those who were less motivated, and giving private feedback can make them more aware of their problems and mistakes, which is somehow impossible in real classes”.

3.3. Service quality

There are two views regarding service quality, as revealed by the direct content analysis. Several participants expressed concern about the lack of technical, financial, or professional support from stakeholders, administrators, or experts. To illustrate, [T11] mentioned that *“I didn’t have technical knowledge because we should use special software for recording, cutting, editing, these works at first took much time for me to learn”*. Moreover, [T2] explained about lack of financial support from governments as he said *“There was no financial support and even I had to use home internet to connect the classes”*. [T1] asserted *there was no special course or workshop, no pre-requisite*. Several participants reported receiving support from university administrators and authorizers. As stated by [T7] in this line, *“institute provided us with IT support via WhatsApp group and if we had technical issues, we could send messages and they should be online all the time to answer our questions and solve the problems*.

3.4. User satisfaction

Based on the results of the thematic content analysis, it appears that our participants had two perspectives on this issue. As a result of disengagement among students or inadequate infrastructure in Iran, they did not wish to have OLT during the post-pandemic. As an instance [T4] stated *I think the culture of Iranian students is not suitable for this kind of teaching because in online classes, the learners should take most of the responsibilities but here in Iran that doesn’t happen*. Also, [T13] believed that *due to a lack of proper internet bandwidth and learners’ engagement, I prefer to continue face-to-face classrooms*. The students' level and psychological factors may also play a role in integrating OLT during post-pandemic. According to [T3],

For PhD or MA students’ online classes are suitable because they are willing to learn and they can even gain clues in the class and search some other resources but I think the lower students’ learning is limited to what happens in the class so it is why for them, it is not good. Likewise, [T8] said that *for shy students I prefer to have online classes*. Meanwhile, some participants stated they planned to utilize OLT as a means of managing their language classes at university and institute at the same time during the post-pandemic period. For instance, [T12] announced *I can double my income. I can connect to the students who are not living in my hometown. It is the biggest opportunity that I can teach online*. Moreover, they plan to combine their traditional language classes with OLT and utilize a blended or flipped approach. According to [T5] *exercises and practice can be done via online classes but in the main session, the instruction can be in person*.

3.5. Net benefits

In the analysis of the content, it was discovered that OLT had a positive influence on university students, lecturers, and administrators during the pandemic. Accordingly, it proposes economic aspects for universities since no money was allocated to provide a place for language instruction. In this line, [T9] claimed: that *it was cost-effective because they didn't need to have the budget for renting buildings or providing class facilities*. Moreover, administrators had envisaged these abrupt changes and were forced

to modernize their national curriculum with high-tech tools. As [T2] declared, *pedagogical experts did not have any choice but to embed technology into the national curriculum during the outbreak*. The OLT program has also been reported to be beneficial to university instructors. It benefited professors in many ways, including improving their professional knowledge and helping them overcome their technophobia. To illustrate, [T1] mentioned: *the opportunity for me to be able to learn how to teach language online in the virtual environment, to learn a lot in online language classes, to learn how to interact in different ways with students, able to avoid being technophobic*. [T2] asserted that *before corona I thought that it was a bit impossible to run classes online. But after experiencing this condition, I'm sure that I can do this for my private students*.

In addition, the content analysis provided evidence that OLT had a positive impact on university learners from the perspective of the participants. The flexible aspects of OLT were not only beneficial to university instructors who could teach anytime, anywhere but also beneficial for university learners from faraway locations. For instance, [T5] said, *for MA or PhD students it was a nice choice because some of them are from other cities, and they didn't have to commute. It was cheap for non-native students. They didn't have to commute*. Moreover, students can regulate their work and study by the OLT. In this line, [T2] claimed, *students were able to schedule their time and they had access to their professors all the time*". Further, OLT can lead university learners to be self-dependent. As declared by [T2], *it was very useful in students' self-regulated learning strategies because they had to learn some strategies and techniques to learn on their own in this situation*.

4. DISCUSSION

By and large, the result of the deductive content analysis showed that OLT brought a mix of positive and negative aspects from university lecturers' standpoints. The present study resorted to DeLone and McLean's (2003) model of IS success to support data analysis, collection, and discussion of the findings as follows:

As mentioned earlier, system quality addressed OLT had positive and negative aspects from university lecturers' perspectives. It was found that OLT provided a flexible context for lectures as they can arrange their university language classes anywhere, at any time. This is consistent with previous Iranian studies that noted the same quality of OLT (Badrkhani, 2021; Rahimi & Tafazoli 2022a). It can also provide the situation for them to have peer activities and have a large number of HIE students in their class (Estrella, 2022). Having had a safe situation for lectures, OLT was cost-effective for them (Badrkhani, 2021; Oliveira et al., 2021). It also provided a context for lectures to variously assess their language students via chat box, poll, or synchrony face-to-face interaction (Üstün Aksoy, 2022) and cover language learners' visual and auditory styles (Rahimi & Tafazoli, 2022a).

Despite the beneficial aspects, OLT had unprofitable features for lectures too. According to data analysis, lack of privacy was the most outstanding downside of OLT that lectures struggled with since language learners shared their movies or audio on social media unwantedly. Also, language learners might hear some voices relating to the lecturers' personal lives. This finding aligns with recent studies addressing the same feature (Rahimi & Atefi Boroujeni, 2022). Cheating was another problem addressed by the participants. Language learners referred to their books during online assessments and attended the class by signing in to the platform without using their cameras. These problems might stem from Iranian teachers' inadequate assessment strategies to evaluate their learners' performance (Mashhadlou & Izadpanah, 2021; Rahimi & Atefi Boroujeni, 2022) and learners' beliefs about language courses which might not impact their future image (Al Shlowiy et al., 2021). Lack of classroom management, CALL literacy, time management, and giving learners proper feedback were other unfavorable characteristics of OLT. A plausible explanation for these issues might allude to lack of language lecturers' readiness to

transit their traditional classes to online ones (Badrkhani, 2021; Rahimi & Atefi Boroujeni, 2022), lack of workshop or support from expertise (Al Shlowiy et al., 2021; Taghizadeh & Basirat, 2022) on how to manage their class, give feedback, and have teacher-students class during Covid-19.

Additionally, OLT makes territory language educators unable to cover some learning styles, especially kinesthetic ones, as well as body language and face-to-face communication. Furthermore, HIE students were reluctant to have OLT or were passive due to lack of interaction and engagement during this outbreak (Ağçam et al., 2021; Badrkhani, 2021; Rahimi & Atefi Boroujeni, 2022; Rahimi & Tafazoli, 2022a). Lack of infrastructure, internet instability, and the platform itself with breaking up voice were other negative aspects of OLT. These findings coincide with a recent literature report (Ringer & Kreitz-Sandberg, 2022), particularly in the Iranian EFL context (Hedayati & Marandi, 2014; Mousavi et al., 2021; Taghizadeh & Basirat, 2022; Rahimi & Atefi Boroujeni, 2022; Rahimi & Tafazoli, 2022a).

Findings also revealed that language instructors had struggled with preparing materials while OLT which might stem from having a large number of students in various general English classes in universities. Moreover, HIE learners struggled with OLT as some of them came from low-income families, and it would be difficult for them to access ICT gadgets during the economic sanctions. This finding coincides with the recent report by the United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF, 2020) that at least 200 million learners accommodated in low and middle-income countries had not fully experienced online language learning.

Regarding the quality of the OLT, the deductive content analysis showed that it had various negative and positive effects on university teachers' physical health, language teaching procedures, and psychological aspects. For instance, OLT had a corrosive effect on HIE teachers' eyesight and hearing. This problem aligns with Yan et al.'s (2021) claim that the screen size of smartphones had an alarming impact on users' eyesight during the OLT. Regarding their teaching procedures, lectures had some difficulty in covering all language skills in university classrooms. Moreover, they had teacher-centered classes during ERLT as they had active roles in their classes while their learners had minor interactions and were passive learners. As mentioned by previous Iranian studies, a lack of readiness for language teachers leads them to cover some language skills by trying to mirror-in-class teaching in OLT (Badrkhani, 2021; Rahimi & Atefi Boroujeni, 2022; Rahimi & Tafazoli, 2022b).

Moreover, to have higher engagement and a learner-centered class, teachers should apply pedagogical innovation and create a sense of empathy (Bozkurt & Sharma, 2020) and belonging (Wang & East, 2020) in their OLT classes. Yan et al., (2021) also found that there was a positive relationship between learners' attitudes towards real-time communication and stable internet connection. Moreover, HIE instructors had a positive interaction with their HIE students and provided feedback for them. It might be related to the system quality of the OLT and the flexibility aspects mentioned earlier. OLT also had desired implications for introvert learners who had lower interaction in their face-to-face classes to become more active in OLT. This finding resonates with Rahimi and Tafazoli, (2022a) addressing the similar feature of OLT. Moreover, OLT provides more energy and time for language lectures and students culminating in motivation for both of them. It is in line with what Rahimi (2023) identifies and validates in the Iranian EFL context as an *authenticity gap*, a phenomenon in which language learners prefer to learn a language in an unstructured setting rather than a structured setting based on their instrumentalities, and L2 motivational identities influencing their intention and attitude toward learning a foreign language online.

Service quality deals with how executives, pedagogical experts, and stakeholders support HIE instructors while having OLT. On one side, some participants claimed that administrators supported them when they faced any problem during classes or provided various platforms and ran workshops. This finding contradicts other Iranian studies (Ghanbari & Nowroozi., 2022; Rahimi & Tafazoli, 2022a).

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However, the heterogeneous sampling in this study led to data in which others complained about the lack of support from executives to escalate their CALL literacy or professional knowledge of OLT. Also, lecturers did not receive technical support when faced with technical problems, including loss of sounds or inability to access their class. Moreover, they needed financial support from the states as they did not like to use their home internet or personal laptops. These findings are in line with recent studies addressing the lack of professional (Panadero et al., 2022), technical (Hedayati & Marandi, 2014; Rahimi & Tafazoli, 2022a), and financial support (Rahimi & Atefi Boroujeni, 2022) during ERLT.

As mentioned in the literature, user satisfaction refers to language lecturers' intention to apply OLT during the post-pandemic. The direct content analysis illustrated that professors had negative perceptions of applying ICT gadgets during the post-corona due to the irresponsibility of the Iranian EFL learners to be more self-organized. According to Rahimi and Atefi Boroujeni (2022), a lack of self-dependence from learners to be more engaged in their virtual classes was a negative factor affecting teachers' attitudes towards OLT. Lack of proper infrastructure, namely high internet bandwidth was another factor that influenced teachers to have negative attitudes towards ICT integration during the post-pandemic. There has already been some discussion of this issue in previous Iranian findings (Hedayati & Marandi, 2014; Rahimi & Tafazoli, 2022a). If stakeholders and experts involve HIE instructors in decision-making and improving their OLT systems, lectures will positively affect OLT (Alqabbani et al., 2020).

The findings also disclosed that lectures tend to implement ICTs in post-pandemic via blended or flipped language teaching approaches. Furthermore, they like to embed their university classes with ICTs for introverted learners with low-level interaction due to their shyness. However, the result showed that this also relies on learners' levels. Rahimi and Atefi Boroujeni (2022) reported the same finding in the Iranian EFL context from learners' standpoints. Moreover, teachers positively perceived OLT as they handled their university classes and institutes simultaneously, culminating in providing more income for them. This might relate to the flexibility aspects of OLT.

The last component of our theoretical framework represents the ripple impact of OLT on society, incorporating stakeholders, teachers, and students. In line with Macintyre et al., (2020), the theoretical content analysis elucidated that OLT disrupted society as they relied on ICT gadgets and became lazy. Not only did OLT transfer new technologies to the university campus, but its flexibility aspects were cost-effective as they did not need to provide a place for their lectures. Additionally, professors became demotivated due to a lack of classroom management, lack of support, and professional literacy discussed earlier. This finding has already been observed in the Vietnam context regarding university teachers' continued intentions to online teaching during the post-pandemic pandemic (Khong et al., 2022). OLT also allowed lecturers to have a work-life balance, particularly the females. Slišković and Seršić (2011) have already reported this challenge and claimed that female lectures had a high level of work-related stress. Nevertheless, OLT forced teachers to boost their professional competence (Alqabbani et al., 2020), overcome their technophobia (Estrella, 2022), and gain more experience in utilizing ICT gadgets during post-pandemic. OLT had also a desired impact on university learners' self-regulation.

However, due to our sampling strategy, some lecturers claimed that their learners disengaged from online schooling as they lacked self-direct strategies. According to Rahimi and Cheraghi (2022), self-regulation relies on context-specific factors, including learners' future self-image, teachers' professional knowledge, and the context they are schooling. OLT had a positive impact on learners' economic aspects as they didn't pay any price for communicating. These findings were replicated by previous studies (Hedayati & Marandi, 2014; Rahimi & Tafazoli, 2022a).

Moreover, it helped learners who lived in the far cities continue their education without physical presence and have a work-life balance. However, lecturers claimed that due to the anxiety and

nervousness learners perceived during online assignments, their online achievements decreased. As mentioned in the literature, anxiety is associated with learners' satisfaction with the way they are taught and assessed (Heckel & Ringeisen, 2019). It also contradicts Alqabbani et al.'s (2020) reporting that there were no differences in learners' performance in face-to-face and OLT.

5. CONCLUSION

There have been considerable changes following the Covid-19 crisis, particularly in online schooling. A study of language teachers' attitudes toward ERLT has already been conducted during the COVID-19 outbreak. Through the application of DeLone and McLean's model, this qualitative study continued previous studies on Iranian EFL lecturers' continuing intentions towards OLT during the post-pandemic period. Our findings would have theoretical and practical implications for online language teaching both locally and globally.

In terms of theoretical aspects, the study adds value to the current literature on English language teaching (ELT), OLT, and educational technologies by taking advantage of language lectures' continued intentions toward OLT in the post-pandemic period. It also diverted attention from exploring teachers' attitudes towards online language teaching by integrating TAM, TPB, and UTAULT into DIMIS since it received less attention from scholars in recent studies to escalate the predictive power of uncovering ICT users' behavioral intentions toward target ICT, particularly after using it, and the Iranian EFL context.

The findings of the present study will have some practical implications for states, pedagogical experts, lecturers, and higher education educators, enabling them to have successful OLT in the future. The first step should be for states to enhance their infrastructure, particularly their internet bandwidth, and ensure that some internet packages and ICT gadgets are available to those giving language lectures, both within and outside universities. Iranian pedagogical experts must provide their university instructors with financial, technical, and professional support. They should conduct workshops to improve their CALL literacy and technical proficiency and ensure that the lectures are free of any technophobia as well. As part of their efforts to improve their OLT systems for the post-pandemic, lecturers should also be involved in decision-making processes since they were at the forefront of online language teaching during the recent pandemic and have been directly confronted with OLT challenges and difficulties. If ICT gadgets are incorporated into the national curriculum, language teachers will indirectly be able to advance their approaches, methods, and professional knowledge. By integrating face-to-face teaching and OLT, lectures would cover all language skills and styles and engage their learners to be active rather than passive. The students should be encouraged to participate more actively in such situations.

As with any study, this study has its limitations. First, the small number of participants and sampling may be a limitation. Thus, future studies are recommended to explore HIE lectures' experience towards OLT by applying purposeful sampling with other samples. To ensure generalizability, future research encourages applying the same framework in other ESL and EFL contexts with students and teachers. Last but not least, they can explore users' attitudes toward OLT by applying other theoretical frameworks such as the Theory of Reason Action, the Theory of Planned Behavior, or the Innovation of Diffusion Theory.

Conflict of Interest: The authors declare no conflict of interest.

Ethical Approval: The study adheres to the ethical guidelines for conducting research.

Funding: This research received no external funding.

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