

The Utilization of Zoom's Videoconferencing in Teaching English Language in Primary Stage in Riyadh: Teachers' Perspective

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Abstract: It is expected that utilizing videoconferencing platforms in language learning and teaching differs from face-to-face education. In this regard, this study aims to examine how English teachers perceive the use of Zoom's videoconferencing in their teaching during distance education as well as exploring skills that enhanced more and skills teachers think there were difficult to be taught online. To achieve the goal, the descriptive approach was adopted. The study sample consisted of 8 English teachers, and the questionnaire was used to collect data. The findings of this study revealed that teachers perceived Zoom as a user-friendly platform that can be used in distance education. They showed their satisfaction with their experience. The findings also discovered that speaking is the skill that was enhanced more in distance education, followed by writing, followed by listening. Even though writing was the second enhanced skill, it appeared to be the difficult skill to be taught at a distance. The study recommended the importance of holding training courses for English teachers concerning the effective strategies to be used in distance language teaching.

Keywords: videoconferencing, teaching online, distance education, EFL teachers.

واقع استخدام برنامج زوم (Zoom) في تدريس اللغة الإنجليزية للمرحلة الابتدائية من وجهة نظر المعلمات في منطقة الرياض

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الملخص: هدفت هذه الدراسة إلى الكشف عن واقع استخدام برنامج زوم في تدريس مادة اللغة الإنجليزية في ظل جائحة كورونا من وجهة نظر المعلمات، كما تسعى أيضاً إلى التعرف على آراء المعلمات حول أكثر مهارات اللغة الإنجليزية تم تعزيزها أثناء التعلم عن بعد والمهارات التي يواجهن صعوبة في تدريسها عبر منصات الفيديو. أجريت الدراسة على عينة من معلمات اللغة الإنجليزية للمرحلة الابتدائية في مدينة الرياض وعددهن (8) معلمات، ولتحقيق أهداف الدراسة استخدمت الباحثة المنهج الوصفي، وتم استخدام الاستبانة كأداة للدراسة. توصلت نتائج الدراسة إلى أن تصورات المعلمات حول منصة زوم على أنها منصة سهلة الاستخدام ولها فعاليتها في التدريس عن بعد، كما كشفت رضاهن عن استخدامها. وتوصلت النتائج أيضاً إلى أن مهارة التحدث هي أكثر مهارة تم تعزيزها أثناء التعلم عن بعد، بينما مهارة الكتابة هي أكثر المهارات التي تواجه المعلمات صعوبة في تدريسها. وقد أوصت الدراسة بأهمية عقد دورات تدريبية حول استراتيجيات التدريس الفعالة في تدريس اللغة الإنجليزية أثناء التعليم عن بعد.

الكلمات المفتاحية: منصات الفيديو، التدريس عن بعد، التعليم عن بعد، معلمات اللغة الإنجليزية.

Introduction.

Technology has been widely used in second language classrooms in the 21st century education. The utilization of technology has been gradually integrated into the teaching experience as it promotes student engagement (Lenkaitis, 2020), facilitates (Abraham, 2008) and supports the learning process (Gaebel, Kupriyanova, Morais & Colucci, 2014 as cited in Anderson & Rivera-Vargas, 2020). Educational technology is not restricted to be used inside the classroom walls to support learning and enhance engagement, but even in distance education as it mediated the teaching and learning process.

Online distance learning has been growing rapidly and become a central subject in the education field (Simonson, Zvacek & Smaldino, 2019). In current online distance learning, technology is considered as an essential tool that mediates the educational process. Online distance classes mostly rely on live online videoconferencing programs to maintain communication between learners and their teacher even though they are in different geographical locations. The previously mentioned scholars suggested that advanced technology innovations make it available and easy to telecommunicate when learning at a distance (Simonson et al., 2019). In the online distance learning process, there are three substantial participants including teachers, learners and educational process managers (Kruk & Zhuravleva, 2012), however, learner is the most crucial member in distance learning situation (Simonson et al., 2019).

Statement of Problem:

Due to Covid-19 pandemic, the education system has been shifted and turned from face-to-face into online learning. By adopting Online distance learning, the use of synchronous videoconferencing tools has significantly increased (Kohnke & Moorhouse, 2020; Wiederhold, 2020) such as Microsoft teams and Zoom. Chawla (2020) indicated that at the end of 2019 and before Coronavirus widespread, the number of Zoom's daily meeting participants were only 10 million. While by March 2020, the usage has exploded to 200 million (Chawla, 2020). In second language context, it is expected that utilizing videoconferencing platforms in language learning and teaching differs from face-to-face education. Thus, it was a worthwhile work to examine the use of videoconferencing platforms in second language online classrooms.

Research Questions:

This study seeks to understand how English language teachers perceived their experience in teaching English language via Zoom videoconferencing on distance education as well as exploring English language skills that enhanced more and skills teachers think it is difficult to be taught online. In this regard, the study attempts to answer the following questions:

1. How do English teachers perceive utilizing Zoom's videoconferencing in their teaching during distance education?

2. What are the English language skills that teachers think they are enhanced more when learning at a distance?
3. In distance education context and from teachers' perspectives, which skills English teachers face difficulty in teaching?

The purpose of the study:

After the education system changed from in-person to online format, the interaction between English teachers and learners might be reduced. So, there is a need to examine the quality of English language teaching process. In this regard, the current study aimed to examine how English teachers perceive the use of Zoom's videoconferencing in their teaching during distance education as well as exploring skills that were enhanced more and skills teachers think they were difficult to be taught online.

Significance of the study:

Since distance learning becomes the trend today, the current study reflects feedback about teachers' perceptions on using videoconferencing platform, Zoom in particular, in teaching English during distance education environment as well as exploring the most enhanced skills and the skills teachers face difficulty in teaching at a distance. Therefore, this study might contribute to improve online English language teaching. Also, it might be significant for course designers as distance learning viewed to be integrated with formal education. Lastly, this study could be significant for other researchers who are interested in videoconferencing platforms in distance learning.

Definition of terms

- **Videoconferencing:** a mean of communication in which the connected users are able to share audio and visual facilities in the meantime (Al-Samarraie, 2019). On this paper, Zoom is the only used videoconferencing platform. It can be installed from Google play or Apple store.
- **Distance education:** refers to formal education (accredited by an educational institution) in which the students and the teacher are separated in time and/or distance (Anderson & Rivera-Vargas, 2020: 212).

Literature Review

Distance education

With the technological advances, the online distance learning has taken a consistent and unstoppable evolution (Colak, 2018). According to Agostinelli (2019) online learning represents the latest development of distance education. The connotation of distance education refers to both learning and teaching process which take place in separated locations, require means of interaction via use of

technologies (Moore & Kearsley, 2011). Anderson and Rivera-Vargas (2020: 212) defined distance education as “formal education (accredited by an educational institution) in which the students and the teacher are separated in time and/or distance”. There are two methods of implementing distance learning which are synchronous and asynchronous (Gunes & Alagozlu, 2020). Asynchronous distance learning occurs if teacher and learners are separated in term of place and time. On other hand, synchronous distance learning related to the situation in which the teacher and learners are connected at the same time but from different geographical locations (Gunes & Alagozlu, 2020). Ghazal, Samsudin and Aldowah (2015) pointed out that synchronous distance education environment is quite closer to the traditional class environment in term of giving and receiving immediate feedback as well as having synchronous communication.

In 2019, distance education became a much more appealing and interactive learning experience (Agostinelli, 2019). The effective implementation of distance education relies on the teachers as they are the key players (Orhan & Beyhan, 2020). Orhan and Beyhan, (2020) suggested ways to enhance the quality of distance education. First, the objectives and content of the education program\course should be determined as well as the teaching strategies and techniques. Second, there is a need to decide on technology that would be used to deliver the information. Third, determining learners’ responsibilities during the learning process as they need to take charge of their own learning. Gok, (2015) is in agreement in identifying responsibilities of students in order to have successful distance learning. According to Orhan and Beyhan (2020), the successfulness of distance learning process, might be affected by some factors; for instance, technical issues such as internet connection and picture\ audio related problems. Another factor influences the quality of distance learning process is teacher-learners interaction. The synchronous interaction between teachers and learners can be established by using videoconferencing tools (Ghazal et al., 2015).

Video conferencing

Today, there are considerable numbers of videoconferencing platforms (Clopper, Baccei & Sel, 2020) that can be utilized as a mediating tool in distance education. Videoconferencing technology can be defined as a mean of communication in which the connected users are able to share audio and visual facilities in the meantime (Al-Samarraie, 2019), and the registers users, through the platform being used, are allowed to transmit slides, files, texts and images (Krutka & Carano, 2016). Utilizing videoconferencing as a learning instrument has been increased (Al-Samarraie, 2019), especially when formal education is not possible. The reason attributes to the fact that it allows synchronous connection (Lenkaitis, Calo & Venegas Escobar, 2019) and effective interaction (Al-Samarraie, 2019) between teachers and learners or learners and their peers.

In their research, Lenkaitis, Calo and Venegas Escobar (2019) pointed out that, among videoconferencing tools, Zoom has been shown to be the most efficient platform. They referred the reasons to its user-friendliness, free capacity for recording videos up to 40 minutes in length and the fact that it needs only one person to create an account (Lenkaitis et al., 2019). Nash (2020) is in agreement with this point. Gray, Wong-Wylie, Rempel and Cook (2020) mentioned similar reasons and added that it includes password protection for confidentiality, while Kohnke and Moorhouse (2020) mentioned annotation tool, breakout rooms and polls. Results of Clopper, Baccei and Sel's (2020) study evaluating Zoom and Microsoft teams based on users' experiences illustrated that Zoom generally received higher rating. In second language learning context, the literature revealed that videoconferencing enables learners to practice the second language as well as allowing them to engage actively in virtual copresence (Lenkaitis et al., 2019) and knowledge building process (Lenkaitis, 2020).

Many studies in literature discussed videoconferencing in the education field from varying perspectives such as telecollaboration, intercultural competence development, pre-service teachers' education, teachers' perceptions as well as enhancing engagement, success and motivation of students (Ayoub, 2019; Benitt, 2019; Lenkaitis, 2020; Lenkaitis et al., 2019; Yu, 2018). Among them, some studied were interested in Zoom's videoconferencing in particular (Ayoub, 2019; Lenkaitis, 2020; Lenkaitis et al., 2019).

Relevant studies

In his study, Ayoub (2019) investigated the impact of zoom session as a synchronous learning strategy on enhancing the engagement, success and motivation of Lebanese University students. He sampled 60 students and divided them into two groups, control and experimental in which each group contained 30 students. The study found that zoom sessions enhanced EFL students' English language level and motivation towards the learning process. Another study (Lenkaitis, 2020) was interested in synchronous computer-mediated communication (SCMC) via Zoom. The study aimed to investigate how L2 learners develop their autonomy when partnered with other learners. The participants were 25 L2 Spanish learners from the same university utilized SCMC over a 6-week implementation period. They were assigned as groups consisting of 2-3 members. All group members were required to meet every week synchronously, discuss course-related topics in Spanish. The study revealed that Zoom can be used by learners as an effective tool for SCMC course-related activities to develop learner autonomy and create an authentic language experience.

Yu (2018) conducted a study to explore the perceptions of native English-speaking teachers on utilizing out-of-class videoconferencing in teaching English to EFL elementary school students in Taiwan. The participant teachers responded to a post-videoconferencing survey with open-ended questions. By analyzing the native English-speaking teachers' feedback on videoconferencing, their experience was the

result of three themes which are as follows: student performance, technical aspects, and the videoconferencing activity itself.

The current study targeted Zoom as it becomes one of the popular platforms being used today in formal distance language teaching and learning. When reviewing relevant researches on videoconferencing in L2 learning, it is found that many studies focused on students' perceptions on videoconferencing in distance educations. However, very limited number of studies paid attention to explore language teachers' perceptions. Thus, the current study contributed to fill this gap.

Methodology

This study followed the descriptive approach to investigate how English teachers perceive their use of Zoom's videoconferencing in their teaching when the education system shifted to online. The research participants were 8 female English language teachers who taught English subject in private elementary schools in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia. Their experience in teaching ranged from 4 months to 13 years. Among them, five teachers were familiar with Zoom before utilizing it in teaching at a distance.

Data collection and Analysis

The data were gathered by using a closed questionnaire comprised of 17 questions. There were two major sections. The first section consisted of 5 questions and was relevant to general information. The second section comprised of 12 questions which was designed to answer the research questions. This section is divided into three categories including the useability of Zoom, its effectiveness in distance teaching and teachers' satisfaction with using it. Google forms were used and the questionnaire was distributed electronically.

Experts test validity of the questionnaire. In order to confirm the reliability, Cronbach Alpha was calculated and the result revealed $\alpha=0.92$, indicating a high level of internal consistency.

A quantitative method approach was adopted in this study. The questionnaire data were analyzed statistically by using the Statistical Packages for Social Science (SPSS 25). Descriptive statistical procedures such as frequencies, percentage, means and standard deviation were used to examine the data and to draw conclusions.

Result of the Study

In this section, teachers' responses are reported. All the participant teachers have experienced Zoom in teaching English subject on distance education. The distributed questionnaire contained statements which were designed to discover English teachers' perceptions on using Zoom's videoconferencing as well as identifying the most enhanced skills and the skills teachers face difficulty in their distance teaching.

Based on the analyzed data, the majority of teachers (87%) perceived Zoom as a user-friendly program which any teacher can use without training. Regarding scheduling a meeting, only (25%) of the teachers indicated that they frequently ask for help when scheduling a meeting in Zoom. As for displaying the teaching materials, most of the teachers (75%) agreed that Zoom allows them to display their teaching materials while (25%) selected 'neutral'. So, none of the teachers disagreed with this statement. When asked about implementing activities, (37%) of the teachers stated that it is difficult to implement peer\group activities when teaching via Zoom whereas all the teachers (100%) agreed in various degrees on the ease of implementing individual activities. Concerning potential problems, quarter of the participants (25%) indicated that the free 40 minutes that Zoom provides is a problem affected their teaching while only (12%) indicated that sometimes the meeting did not start quickly and required waiting. As for teachers' satisfactions, most of the teachers (87%) enjoyed teaching via Zoom and preferred to use it rather than other platforms. More than half of the teachers (62%) were satisfied about their teaching during the current situation of distance education.

To analyze each category statistically, the mean and standard deviation of each category were calculated as shown in Table (1).

Table (1) Means of the questionnaire categories

Category	Mean	Std. Deviation	Teachers' perspectives
The use ability of Zoom	3.44	.94	Positive
The effectiveness of Zoom in distance teaching and learning	3.78	.77	Positive
Teachers' satisfaction with Zoom platform	4.21	.85	Positive

When the participating teachers asked about the learners' English language skills that were enhanced more on distance education, their responses are as shown in Table 2.

Table (2) Responses to the English language skills that enhanced more on distance education

Skill	Frequency	Percentage
Speaking	6	33.3%
Writing	5	27.8%
Listening	4	22.2%
Reading	3	16.7%
Total	18	100.0%

Teachers' responses indicated that speaking is the most enhanced skill followed by writing, followed by listening while reading is the least.

Regarding teaching English language skills, teachers asked about the most difficult skills they faced when they experience online teaching. Their answers are as shown in Table 3.

Table (3) Responses to English skills teachers face difficulty when teaching at a distance

Skill	Frequencies	Percentage
Writing	4	28.6%
Grammar	3	21.4%
Speaking	3	21.4%
Listening	2	14.3%
Reading	2	14.3%
Vocabulary	0	0 %
Total	14	100.0%

From Table (3) above, teachers' responses indicated that writing is the most skill teachers face difficulty in teaching at a distance, followed by speaking and grammar in the same level, followed by reading and listening equally, while vocabulary received no difficulty.

Discussion

The main concern of this section is to discuss and interpret the findings of the teachers' questionnaire. This has been undertaken in light of the research questions. The findings of this study help advance our understanding of English teachers' perceptions on Zoom's videoconferencing during distance education as well as the most enhanced skills and difficult skills to be taught online based on their experiences.

In agreement with previous researchers (Gray et al., 2020; Kohnke & Moorhouse, 2020; Lenkaitis et al., 2019; Nash, 2020), the results of this study indicated that Zoom is a user-friendly program. This feature in Zoom might be the reason behind teachers' preference to use Zoom's videoconferencing in their teaching. Even though some of them indicated the difficulty of implementing peer\group activities, most of the teachers perceived Zoom as an effective platform can be used in distance education. They agreed on the ease of displaying teaching materials and implementing individual activities.

Distance education eases teachers' tasks as they transfer knowledge immediately to their students (Kats, 2010). Therefore, most of the teachers in this study enjoyed their experience in teaching through videoconferencing. Based on their perspectives, speaking is the skill that was enhanced more on distance education, followed by writing, followed by listening while reading is viewed as the least developed skill. It can be interpreted that the development of speaking skill is attributed to the fact that distance education assists students to participate and express their opinions without embarrassment and anxiety (Johnson, 2003).

Additionally, the findings reveal that writing is considered as the most skill teachers face difficulty in teaching through videoconferencing, followed by speaking and grammar in the same level, followed by reading and listening equally. However, vocabulary appeared to be the easiest skill to be taught online

since none of the teachers chose it as a difficult skill. This finding supports Kroll's (1990) claim when indicating that writing is a challenging task for native speakers and more complicated for non-natives. The difficulty in teaching writing through videoconferencing platforms might attribute to the lack of students' motivation, as it is essential factor affecting their writing ability (Hidayati, 2018) and their distance learning in general (Hartnett, 2019).

Conclusion

Overall, this study investigates English teachers' perceptions on Zoom's videoconferencing during distance education as well as the most enhanced skills and difficult skills to be taught online based on their experiences. Nevertheless, there are several limitations should be borne in mind. Firstly, this study focused on limited number of teachers and conducted on a short period of time. Also, in this study, questionnaire was adopted as the only data source. Further research is hence needed to adopt interview along with the questionnaire as tools to collect data, and sample large size for obtaining more valid results. Based on its findings, the present study recommended the importance of holding training courses for English teachers regarding the effective strategies to be used in distance language teaching. For future research, it is recommended to examine the effectiveness of other platforms used in distance teaching. Finally, the challenges faced English teachers in teaching writing skill during distance education is also recommended.

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