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Research Paper

Using Adobe Connect Platform: A Case of Iranian English Learners and Teachers in Sirjan

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Abstract

The COVID-19 pandemic has created the most significant disruption of education systems in human history worldwide. In the present condition, E-learning platforms have gained more importance and become a permanent part of teachers' and students' lives. Consequently, studying E-learning platforms from a systemic approach gained the most prominence. One of the available and most used online platforms in Iran is "Adobe Connect". Therefore, this study has investigated the challenges and benefits of using "Adobe Connect" in the Iranian E-learning system from the point of view of EFL students and teachers. This is a case study in which an in-depth understanding of language learning through the mentioned online platform was sought. The participants consisted of 10 EFL teachers and 158 students studying English at Islamic Azad University and Ilia Language Institute in Sirjan, who were selected based on purposive sampling. The data were collected using a researcher-made five-Likert scale questionnaire, including 27 items and semi-structured interviews. The results indicated a moderately positive attitude of language learners' toward "Adobe Connect". In addition, the EFL teachers presented a series of advantages and disadvantages of this platform. The obtained outcomes could serve the online platform creators and developers, teachers and learners as users of this platform and as a model for countries with similar technology infrastructure and cultural features wishing to improve their e-learning systems.

Keywords: *Adobe Connect; E-learning; E-learning Platform; Online Teaching*

همه‌گیری بیماری کرونا (کووید-۱۹) عمده ترین اختلال را در سیستم‌های آموزشی در تاریخ بشریت و در سراسر جهان ایجاد نموده است. در شرایط کنونی، بسترهای یادگیری الکترونیکی اهمیت بیشتری یافته و به بخش جدایی ناپذیر زندگی معلمان و دانش آموزان تبدیل شده است. در نتیجه، مطالعه پلتفرم‌های آموزش الکترونیکی با رویکرد سیستمی بیشترین اهمیت را پیدا نموده اند. یکی از پلتفرم‌های آنلاین موجود و پرکاربرد در ایران "ادوبی کانکت" است. از این رو، این پژوهش به بررسی چالش‌ها و مزایای استفاده از "ادوبی کانکت" در سیستم آموزش الکترونیکی ایران از دیدگاه دانشجویان و اساتید زبان انگلیسی پرداخته است. در این مطالعه موردی درک عمیقی از یادگیری زبان از طریق بستر آنلاین ذکر شده مورد بررسی قرار گرفت. این تحقیق یک مطالعه ترکیبی است که در آن داده‌ها به طور جداگانه جمع‌آوری و تجزیه و تحلیل شده اند. شرکت کنندگان در این پژوهش شامل ۱۰ معلم زبان انگلیسی و ۱۵۸ دانشجوی شاغل به تحصیل زبان انگلیسی در دانشگاه آزاد اسلامی و موسسه زبان ایلیا در سیرجان بودند که به روش نمونه‌گیری هدفمند انتخاب شدند. داده‌ها با استفاده از مصاحبه و پرسشنامه ۵ گزینه‌ای ساخت محقق که شامل ۲۷ سوال بود گردآوری شدند. نتایج نشان دهنده نگرش نسبتاً مثبت زبان آموزان نسبت "ادوبی کانکت" بود علاوه بر این، اساتید زبان انگلیسی یک سری از مزایا و معایب استفاده از این بستر را ارائه کردند. نتایج حاصل شده می‌تواند به عنوان الگویی برای کشورهایی با زیرساخت‌های فناوری و ویژگی‌های فرهنگی مشابه که مایل به بهبود سیستم‌های آموزش الکترونیکی خود هستند، سازندگان و توسعه‌دهندگان بسترهای آنلاین و معلمان و دانش آموزان به عنوان کاربران این بستر مورد استفاده قرار گیرد.

کلمات کلیدی: ادوبی کانکت، یادگیری الکترونیکی، بستر یادگیری الکترونیکی، آموزش آنلاین

Introduction

The pandemic (COVID-19) worldwide has caused tragic changes in various activities. One essential activity that has undergone many changes and faced many challenges is teaching students and the school education system. While having face-to-face classes was impossible, the Internet has become one of the essential ways to make available resources for research and learning for both teachers and students to share and get information (Richard & Haya, 2009). In addition, changes in learning systems forced schools to implement distance education or online learning, E-learning, distance education, correspondence education, external studies, flexible learning, and massive open online courses (MOOCs) (Ziaul Hoq, 2020).

E-learning is a fast and efficient way of providing and sharing knowledge with learners in different parts of the world. According to Karim and Goodwin (2013, pp.66-67), "E-learning uses the Internet or other digital content for learning and education activities, that takes full advantage of modern educational technology to provide a new mechanism for communication and learning environment rich in resources to achieve a new way of learning."

These days a variety of E-learning platforms are used worldwide, and one of these platforms widely used in Iran is "Adobe Connect." However, like any other platform, it has advantages and disadvantages for both teachers and learners, and this study has aimed to work on the different experiences of learners and teachers while using this platform to examine the extent that it can support all diverse needs of teachers and students. So, this research looks at E-learning and its different features within teaching and learning by means of investigating the Adobe Connect platform and its impact on education through the following research question;

1) What is the point of view of the adult EFL learners studying at Ilia Language Institute and the Islamic Azad University students toward "Adobe Connect" as an online teaching and learning platform?

2) What is the point of view of the Islamic Azad University and the Ilia Language Institute EFL teachers toward "Adobe Connect" as an online teaching and learning platform?

Review of Literature

The word E-learning has been in use since the third millennium AD, and its meaning continues to expand. Today, the term mainly refers to the use of online technologies to enhance the teaching-learning process and acquire knowledge and skills (Ostad et al., 2019). E-learning is the use of information and communication technologies to enhance and support learning at all levels of learning (Cidral et al., 2018). The characteristics of the E-learning process are primarily focused on the Internet, global sharing, and learning resources. Information broadcasting and knowledge flow through network courses, ultimately creating a computer-generated learning environment to overcome distance and time issues, increasing learning flexibility (Liu & Wang, 2009). Providing students with information and practical opportunities to help them acquire definite skills and increase their operational knowledge about a given topic is the primary purpose of E-learning platforms. Different learners may have other characteristics, prior knowledge, motivation, or needs, which is why it is crucial to develop flexible educational systems to make the learning process as effective, efficient, and motivating as possible (De Crook et al., 2012).

From an information and communication technology (ICT) point of view, a platform is made from the hardware, the running device, and the specific purpose application in question. So, while speaking of platforms, it implicitly refers to integrating those three elements, which is critical because they will decide the overall computing capacity. Piotrowski (2010, p.31) offers the following definition for a platform: "An E-learning platform is a system which provides integrated support for the six activities –creation, organization, delivery, communication, collaboration, and assessment in an educational context." Thus, an E-studying platform may be

visible as a controlled repository of tutorial elements, the studying objects. Currently, the primary sorts of structures for E-studying are LMS (Learning Management Systems) and LCMS (Learning Content Management Systems), which can also be divided into instructional and corporate.

Like any other country e-learning and teaching has begun to find a special place in education. One of the main factors affecting the success of education is the use of appropriate educational methods; at all times, in all conditions, proper educational practices must be suitable for all individuals and always helpful and efficient. Due to the prevailing requirements in society caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, all universities and higher education centers in Iran offer distance and online education. Furthermore, students, professors, and university authorities have welcomed this type of teaching based on existing conditions. Despite their concerns about this type of education, students also accept pursuing it (Mulyanti et al., 2020).

However, three challenges include lack of public awareness, lack of government support, and the collectivist society of Iran as the main challenge of E-learning and e-teaching (Mahmoodi-Shahreabaki & Yaghoubi-Notash, 2014). In addition, many learners experience problems such as reluctance to use this type of education, low level of computer literacy, lack of technological literacy, and lack of concentration. Teachers have also reported some issues, including the inability to work with the system, resistance to the use of technology, lack of motivation to adopt technology, and insufficiency of class assignments (Abbasi Kasani et al., 2020). Furthermore, the availability of Internet services and infrastructure to implement online teaching and learning, as well as the availability of suitable platforms, are considered other impediments. Online teaching and learning can be facilitated by training learners and instructors to equip themselves with the skills to use E-learning tools. One of the essential tools which need to be given special attention in this regard is the e-learning platform.

Many researchers have tried to compare different E-learning platforms. For example, in a survey conducted by Al-Mubireek (2019), the researcher provided a comparative study of two E-learning platforms, Blackboard and Oxford IQ Online in Saudi Arabia, from the point of view of 1364 students. This research indicated that students welcomed the benefits of incorporating E-learning opportunities to learn and communicate more effectively. In another study, Elisabeta and Alexandru (2018) compared five popular E-learning platforms present in the market. The comparison was based on the user's profile, price, free trials, media used, facilities offered, technical and documentation support, etc. It concluded the E-learning platform could be successfully integrated into the educational environment by providing online support for teaching while being open to promising future developments in the field.

Another study explored the importance of online learning and investigated the analysis of online education's weaknesses, strengths, challenges, and opportunities during the pandemic (Thakker, 2020). The mentioned study provided some guidelines for dealing with online learning challenges at natural disasters and epidemics.

Nonetheless, given that virtual platforms in Iran have only recently increased, the research conducted on their performance is minimal. Consequently, there is a need to investigate their capabilities to minimize the problems experienced by different stakeholders and select the platforms that best suit our context, learners, and teachers. Adobe Connect is not an exclusion as one of the widely used platforms in Iran. Although this platform is trendy in the Iranian E-learning context, studies conducted on its performance and qualities are scarce. Thus, this study was an attempt to investigate the views of the university and institute English learners and teachers toward Adobe Connect, hoping to ease the way for other researchers to explore the effectiveness of different E-learning platforms in Iran. In addition, it can help analyze the more effective platforms from the point of view of students and teachers.

Methodology

The current study was a collective case study examining the participants' language learning experiences using the 'Adobe Connect' platform among the English learners of Sirjan. This type of study "uses several cases selected to further understand and investigate a phenomenon, population, or general condition. The researcher believes that the phenomenon is not idiosyncratic to a single unit and studying multiple units can provide better illumination" (Ary et al., 2013, pp. 455-456). In an attempt to reach an in-depth understanding of the focus of the study, both qualitative and quantitative data were gathered and analyzed.

Participants

Participants of this study consisted of two major groups: There were ten subjects in the teacher's group consisting of eight females and two males, among whom four were teaching the English language at Azad University and six were teaching at Ilia Language Institute of Sirjan. For this group of participants, teachers were selected through purposive sampling by considering the teacher's experience in using "Adobe Connect" and teaching English online to adults and by focusing on those whose students were chosen as the learners' groups. The number of teachers participating in the study was limited to 10 as data saturation was reached and no new information was obtained (Ary, 2013). There were 103 participants in the university learners' group, among whom 54 were males and 49 were females (these students had the General English course). Also, 55 adult EFL learners studying at Ilia Institute, took part in this study among whom 40 were females, and 15 were males. The age range of participants was from 18 to 49. English was the foreign language for all the participants and they were chosen using purposive sampling. These two groups dealt with the education process while using "Adobe Connect" as an online platform.

Instrument

In the qualitative phase of the study, to assess the participants' ideas about the "Adobe Connect" platform, the researcher developed a questionnaire by considering the literature, existing questionnaires, and the point of view of the experts in the field. This researcher-made questionnaire consisted of 27- items and used a five-Likert scale from Strongly Disagree to Strongly Agree. The questionnaire was piloted on 30 subjects with similar characteristics to the main participants. Its validity was checked according to the correlation coefficient and its reliability was checked according to Cronbach's alpha, demonstrating a high degree of validity and reliability according to the correlation coefficient of 0/89 with a significance level of 0/00 and Cronbach's alpha of 0/97 (See Table 1).

Table 1

Validity and Reliability of Adobe Connect Questionnaire

| Scale | Correlation coefficient | Level of significant | Cronbach's alpha |
|---|-------------------------|----------------------|------------------|
| Participants' point of view about the "Adobe Connect" Questionnaire | 0/89 | 0/0001 | 0/97 |

And for the quantitative phase, this research employed a semi-structured interview to collect teachers' ideas about "Adobe Connect. The researcher interviewed ten teachers from Islamic Azad University and Ilia Institute. Each teacher was interviewed separately by phone for about 25 to 35 minutes. The interviewer was the researcher, and all the data was recorded and later

transcribed having the interviewees' consent. The interview questions were asked in Persian to help interviewees express their ideas entirely and easily, and then they were translated into English. To ensure the equivalency of the translated documents, the back translation was performed.

Data Collection

The primary purpose of this study was to record the different experiences of learners and teachers while using "Adobe Connect" to investigate its efficiency.

The quantitative data collection was conducted as follows: (1) the researcher adapted and prepared the closed-ended questionnaire, (2) the questionnaire was organized and posted in Porsline (an online survey platform), (3) the participants answered the questionnaire. The learners were assured that their responses would be just used in this research and kept confidential. It took each student about 10 minutes to fill out the questionnaire.

The interviews were conducted by phone due to the unique situation caused by the COVID-19 pandemic and the lack of face-to-face access to interview teachers. Therefore, the researcher called those teachers who had experience using "Adobe Connect" in their classes and interviewed them separately with a list of prepared open-ended questions. Each interview was audio-recorded to gather data. Each interview lasted approximately 25 to 35 minutes, and it took about a month to schedule them and interview all ten teachers.

Data Analysis

Data gathered through semi-structured interviews were analyzed using qualitative data analysis procedures. First, the transcribed interviews were analyzed, and various concepts were detected. Then, the core categories forming the EFL teachers' point of view toward "Adobe Connect" were induced. As the last step, the obtained categories were tabulated and their frequency and percentage were calculated.

The quantitative data was analyzed via the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS, Version 23). Descriptive statistics were utilized to run for frequencies, percentages, mean, and standard deviation. In addition, inferential statistics, including one-sample *t*-test and independent samples *t*-test, were administered to determine and compare the participants' points of view toward using "Adobe Connect".

Results

The Attitude of Language Learners toward Adobe Connect

To examine the participants' general attitudes toward "Adobe Connect" as a platform for online teaching and learning, a one-sample *t*-test was used.

Table 2

Descriptive statistics (all the participants)

| | N | Mean | Std. Deviation | Std. Error Mean |
|-------|-----|------|----------------|-----------------|
| Total | 158 | 3.59 | .70 | .055 |

Table 3 compares the mean of the participants' attitudes with the test-value 3 and Quartile 2 (Q2). The score is significantly higher than the average population, with a *t*-value of (157) = 10.64 and a *p*-value of 0.00. Such a *p*-value indicates that the average of the sample population is significantly different from the assumed mean of 3 ($M=3$), with the 95% confidence interval estimate in which the lower limit is 0.48, and the upper limit is 0.70. So, this statistically significant difference between the means and $p < .05$ indicates that the view of the participants toward "Adobe Connect" is above average.

Table 3*One-Sample T-test (all the participants' attitudes)*

| Test Value = 3 | | | | | | |
|----------------|--------|-----------------|-----------------|--------|---|-------|
| | | | | | 95% Confidence Interval of the Difference | |
| T | Df | Sig. (2-tailed) | Mean Difference | Lower | Upper | |
| Total | 10.640 | 157 | .000 | .59423 | .4839 | .7045 |

Based on Table 4 the mean of institute EFL learners' attitude is compared with the test-value 3 and Quartile 2 (Q2). The score is significantly higher than the normal population mean, having a t -value of (54) =12.67 and a p -value of 0.00. Such a p -value indicates that the average of the sample population is significantly different from the assumed mean of 3(M=3), with the 95% confidence interval estimate in which the lower limit is 0.74, and the upper limit is 1.03. Hence, this statistically significant difference between the means and the $p < .05$ indicates that institute EFL learners have a moderately positive attitude toward using “Adobe Connect”.

Table 4*One-Sample T-test (Institute EFL learners)*

| Test Value = 3 | | | | | | |
|----------------|--------|-----------------|-----------------|--------|---|--------|
| | | | | Mean | 95% Confidence Interval of the Difference | |
| T | Df | Sig. (2-tailed) | Mean Difference | Lower | Upper | |
| Total | 12.679 | 54 | .000 | .88956 | .7489 | 1.0302 |

As demonstrated in Table 5, the mean of university students' attitudes is compared with the test-value 3 and Quartile 2 (Q2). The score is significantly higher than the normal population means, having a t -value of (102) =6.01 and a p -value of 0.00. Such a p -value indicates that the average of the sample population is significantly different from the assumed mean of 3(M=3), with the 95% confidence interval estimate in which the lower limit is 0.29, and the upper limit is 0.58. Based on the results, it can be said that from the perspective of the university students, the students' views towards “Adobe Connect” is moderately positive.

Table 5*One-Sample Test (University students)*

| Test Value = 3 | | | | | | |
|----------------|-------|-----------------|-----------------|--------|---|-------|
| | | | | Mean | 95% Confidence Interval of the Difference | |
| T | Df | Sig. (2-tailed) | Mean Difference | Lower | Upper | |
| Total | 6.012 | 102 | .000 | .43653 | .2925 | .5806 |

Descriptive statistics regarding the efficiency of “Adobe Connect” as an online teaching and learning platform from the point of view of both the institute EFL learners and university students are presented in Table 6. A comparison of the mean scores of both groups demonstrates a difference between the two groups, while the institute EFL learners showed a higher mean of 3.88 compared to the university students' mean score of 3.43. In order to see if this difference is significant, independent samples t -test was performed.

Table 6*Descriptive Statistics comparing the point of view of the two groups*

| | Group | N | Mean | Std. Deviation | Std. Error Mean |
|-------|--------------|----|--------|----------------|-----------------|
| Total | EFL learners | 55 | 3.8896 | .52030 | .07016 |

Table 7 shows the result of Levene's test for equality of variance. The Sig. value for Levene's test is larger than .05 (Sig.>.05), which means that the variance for these two groups is the same. The Sig. (2-tailed) value is .00, having a value lower than 0.05 which shows a significant difference between the mean scores of these two groups regarding their attitudes toward Adobe Connect.

Table 7 *Independent sample t-test comparing the point of view of the two groups*

| | Levene's Test for Equality of Variances | | t-test for Equality of Means | | | | | | |
|-----------------------------|---|------|------------------------------|---------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------------|---|--------|
| | F | Sig. | T | Df | Sig. (2-tailed) | Mean Difference | Std. Error Difference | 95% Confidence Interval of the Difference | |
| | | | | | | | | Lower | Upper |
| Total | 3.126 | .079 | 4.049 | 156 | .000 | .45303 | .11188 | .23203 | .67403 |
| Equal variances assumed | | | | | | | | | |
| Equal variances not assumed | | | 4.487 | 144.111 | .000 | .45303 | .10097 | .25346 | .65260 |

The Attitude of EFL Teachers toward Adobe Connect

The qualitative results were categorized into different themes based on the advantages or disadvantages of 'Adobe Connect' presented in Tables 8 and 9.

Table 8*The Advantages of Using Adobe Connect as an Online Platform*

| Advantages | | | |
|------------|--|-----------|------------|
| Number | Teachers' responses | Frequency | Percentage |
| 1 | Possibility of adding audio and short clips in PowerPoint files and uploading them all by uploading PowerPoint at once | 6 | 15.38 |
| 2 | Different good features of writing (Polling / Having several chat boxes at the same time) | 5 | 12.82 |
| 3 | Being a user-friendly platform | 2 | 5.13 |
| 4 | Having the option of breakout rooms helps students to participate in class and speak | 3 | 7.69 |
| Total | | 16 | 41.02 |

Table 9*The Disadvantages of Using Adobe Connect as an Online Platform*

| Disadvantages | | | |
|---------------|---------------------|----------|------------|
| Numbe | Teachers' responses | Frequenc | Percentage |

| r | | y | |
|-------|--|----|-------|
| 1 | Fewer facilities for cell phones in comparison to windows systems | 6 | 15.38 |
| 2 | Voice problems (echoing + problem of having all microphones on at the same time) | 7 | 17.95 |
| 3 | Low graphics (The cold grey color that makes you bored) | 2 | 5.13 |
| 4 | Not supporting the Persian language (you cannot type Persian in the chat box) | 8 | 20.52 |
| Total | | 23 | 58.98 |

Discussion

The Attitude of EFL Learners toward Adobe Connect

The total mean score given in Table 1 (mean score of 3.59) and the one-sample *t*-test in Table 2 examining the general attitude of all the participants demonstrated that the study participants have a moderated positive attitude toward this platform. As it was mentioned, online learning can have several advantages, including being inexpensive, time-saving, and flexible. Students can attend their classes from any geographical location without any travel costs. Many participants could have jobs that would limit their attendance in in-person courses. Furthermore, they might gain a higher sense of self-confidence by taking responsibility for their learning using this learning method (Berman & Carreta, 2006). In addition, some students might experience anxiety in face-to-face classes when they need to encounter their teacher and classmates directly. These learners would also prefer to attend their courses through online platforms (Ninsiana et al., 2022).

Nevertheless, another reason for students' positive attitude could be due to the capabilities of this platform which makes it easier for the participants to learn English. These results align with Heidari-Shahreza et al. (2021), who found the "Adobe Connect" virtual classroom effective in learning technical, and medical vocabulary and students' satisfaction. However, the present study investigated the participants' attitude toward this platform more specifically by looking at its specific characteristics, including the participants' general attitude, the platform's usefulness, and ease of use. Consequently, "Adobe Connect" can be considered a beneficial and applicable platform for online teaching and learning. According to Table 5, the obtained mean of the institute EFL learners was 3.88, and the mean score for the university students was 3.43, which shows that the former group has had a higher positive attitude toward using Adobe Connect compared to the latter. The amount of students' knowledge about the online learning process, the kind of platform they are using and its facilities, the type of conditions provided for distance learning, and the teachers' ability to teach different skills via online platforms can have a direct effect on learners' attitude toward using an online platform for learning (Radovan & Makovec, 2022). Therefore, it can be assumed that the institute EFL learners might have had more favourable conditions in comparison to the general English course university students while learning online. Any efforts to strengthen the effectiveness of online learning need to understand the users' perceptions. Studies have documented both favorable and unfavorable perceptions by students of online learning. Several studies indicate that the instructor's interaction with students considerably impacts the students' perceptions of online learning (Swan et al., 2000). The EFL teachers are asked to pay attention to each individual student while such a condition is not usually possible for the general university courses, including English, including a large number of students. As Driscoll and Carliner (2005) point out students are more capable of resolving their problems whether they belong to their educational field or from their professional life, as they have the proficiency to understand the existing context and then apply the knowledge to resolve it. Students' involvement not only promotes students' learning but also helps to motivate students

for learning. They can realize their problems and activate thinking support to resolve those problems.

The Attitude of EFL Teachers toward Adobe Connect

The obtained data from the interviews were recorded and then transcribed. Then different themes were extracted and categorized into two groups of advantages and disadvantages. Based on the findings, it can be concluded that overall, teachers had a somewhat negative attitude toward using this platform. As presented in Tables 5 and 6, the number of mentioned disadvantages (58.98%) is more than the advantages (41.02%). Many recent studies have considered online teaching and learning as an inseparable part of today's education. For example, Al-Anezi and Alajmi (2021) reported a high acceptance level of implementing distance learning tools among English language instructors in tertiary education in Kuwait. Also, Ali (2020) investigated how teaching and learning can continue after COVID-19 confinement. These studies have emphasized that universities worldwide are shifting toward distance learning, revealing that student accessibility and motivation can play a crucial role in integrating ICT (information and communication technologies) in learning. The interview results have further demonstrated significant differences between using this platform in institutes and universities. As the finding shows using "Adobe Connect" in an institute is very attractive to the institute's students. Teachers of institutes are more aware of its multiple features in comparison to university peers. Technology and online teaching are no longer challenging for EFL teachers and learners. While checking the interviews, it seems that EFL teachers have a more positive attitude toward using this platform in comparison to university masters; actually, it can be said they have adopted it as the main way of teaching and learning process. This acceptance might be because students have always had a closer connection with technology and online services when learning a new language compared to the university setting. As indicated in the study by Lim et al. (2014), students and lecturers had accepted and explored the potency of social media for engagement with the institution, their peers, and for teaching and learning purposes. However, interviewing the university teachers demonstrated that they were not entirely comfortable with online teaching and preferred face-to-face classes. Variables such as age, sex, experience with computers, technology acceptance, and individual learning styles are considered significant factors when discussing the acceptance of technology by students (Keller & Cernrud, 2002). Liaw, Huang, and Chen (2007) argue that "no matter how advanced or capable the technology is, its effective implementation depends upon users having a positive attitude toward it" (p. 1069). The crucial point here is that after talking with the institute's manager during one of the interviews, it became evident that they have regular teaching meetings to talk about their classes and use E-teaching and the platform in their classes. They also teach every student how to use and cope with the platform, which is not part of the university's preparation for online learning and teaching. The university teachers had access to some training clips teaching them how to use this platform in their classes; however, there were no regular meetings or training sessions to mention the problems they encountered, seek direct help, or become familiar with its new features. As a result, it seemed that the university teachers considered teaching through this platform a temporary way of teaching, and they were not quite familiar with its many good features. Hence, the importance of training and increasing the teachers' motivations become increasingly evident because it can directly affect students' motivation and the way they cope with and accept the online teaching and learning processes. It can also be commented that the school or the university system should be adjusted to fit the new situation. Teachers need the training to boost their confidence in dealing with the new conditions imposed by situations such as the COVID-19 pandemic (Kast et al., 2021). Some of the advantages and disadvantages of "Adobe Connect" mentioned by the interviewees as well as their ideas regarding online teaching, are presented.



There is a wide range of advantages while using this platform, some of which are mentioned here according to the point of view of teachers: One of the advantages mentioned by the interviewees of this study was the possibility of uploading and using different audio and video file formats and especially PowerPoint files into the “Adobe Connect” platform. Modern methods depend basically on technology which most students use and prefer in their daily life. PowerPoint presentations have a basic and essential role in teaching the English language (Bryant & Hunton, 2000). Moreover, it increases the sense of fun and interest among students and helps the teacher to achieve the goals. As a result, this suitable atmosphere increases the students’ achievement and helps them to keep the information for a long time. Visual communication can stay in the student’s memory for a long time more than unwritten information. There is consistent evidence that PowerPoint presentation enhances students learning and improves their learning as a result, the students get high grades (Craig & Amneric, 2006). The possibility of playing audio and video files while they are in PowerPoint is the best feature of “Adobe Connect” according to most EFL teachers’ interviews. Teacher 6 (*An institute teacher*) clarified this point, stating that

After working with different online platforms, I found “Adobe Connect” as the only available platform in Iran to support adding audio and short videos to PowerPoint clips and allowing playing them during class.

This feature really helps teachers to save time and avoid students’ distractions because of screen sharing or uploading files separately. The only weakness of this capability was that if the teacher left the online class accidentally or due to a weak internet connection, they had to leave the class; the PowerPoint file must be uploaded again which takes time and interrupts students’ focus. The second great feature of this platform that the participants mentioned refers to the different writing options in online classes of this platform.

Teacher 7 (*an institute teacher*) claim that

Students enjoy the feeling of being involved in making different decisions in their classes, and you can reinforce this feeling by polling which is an excellent feature of this platform. It takes only a few seconds for students to choose their intended option, and then it’s a great opportunity to ask them to express their ideas. Also, sometimes it is required for the students to learn from their peers, and chat boxes are great opportunity for all students to participate and also for teachers to check their weaknesses and provide feedback.

Synchronous communication in the form of online chat allows learners to comment on new work as the curriculum content progresses, and most learners appreciate unique contributions and share curriculum content and opinions with each other (Carrington & Robinson, 2009). Online chat activities and collaborative knowledge building have been shown to allow students to come up with ideas for current social issues related to course content (Marttunen & Laurinen, 2007). Existing studies suggest synchronized online chat conversations in virtual learning environments improve student thinking processes and self-reflection through collaborative learning and peer mentoring (Krüger, 2006). Recent research has recognized the growing importance of collaboration, teamwork, and collaborative intelligence that online chat has taught students (Smith, & Smith, 2014). During synchronous text chat, students modify each other in search of conscious autonomous understanding without teacher guidance (Tare et al., 2014). In addition, students learn how to learn from others through course offerings and negotiate access to and use of online chat by observing others interacting in chat rooms (Smith & Smith, 2014).

Some teachers talked about the user-friendliness of “Adobe Connect”. For example, teacher 5 (*an institute teacher*) states:



I think “Adobe Connect” can be considered a user-friendly platform that supports most online needs of its users. For example, it’s an excellent possibility to be able to use the browser to hold your online classes instead of installing the platform itself. Actually, it saves space on your phone or PC.

Teacher 9 (a university teacher)

Uploading files on this platform is effortless, and it does not need strong internet connection to have or participate in a class. Also, it has great features to use in classes like breakout rooms / the possibility of having some chat boxes simultaneously, and the possibility of changing the writing colors for it.

There were some disadvantages to using “Adobe Connect” that the university teachers only mentioned. For example, none of the university teachers or their students used the webcam in their classes due to the limited time and many students in a class, which can cause some problems. As *teacher 1 (a university teacher)* mentioned:

In an online university class, you cannot have a webcam or even ask your students to have it because of the weak servers of the university and the poor internet connection. So, I feel teaching in university classes is like lecturing to a small group of random guys while you have a considerable number of audiences who are not listening to you and even you cannot check if they are present in the class or not.

In contrast, teacher 2 (an institute teacher) mentioned that:

In my classes, having your camera on is a rule for all students, and my webcam is on too. It’s an excellent way to check all students’ reactions, understand them, and even get feedback from their facial expressions and gestures.

According to the results, voice and microphone issues were the most discussed matters between both groups of teachers. Although most students and teachers use headphones, even headphones do not prevent echoing or weak sound. Furthermore, if two people have their microphones on at the same time or if an audio file is played while a person has his/her mic on can annoy both parties. Teacher 3 (a university teacher) said:

To avoid this issue, you should mute your microphone and then play the audio file. Also, when you activate a person’s mic, you need to mute your mic (presenter’s mic) to avoid echoing or other problems.

The problems experienced by the interviewees when teaching through “Adobe Connect” is in line with other studies considering the disadvantages of teaching virtually. For instance, Fatoni et al. (2020) reported unstable network connection, the synchronicity of instructors’ voices and the lessons, inability to attend classes due to lack of access to the Internet, and lack of concentration of the students as some of the critical problems that teachers have to deal with while teaching online during COVID-19 pandemic.

Another issue that the institute teachers solely mentioned was fewer cellphone facilities on this platform compared to the computer systems, which can negatively affect those who can only attend classes through their cell phones. For instance, while all learners’ webcams are activated, the students who have participated in the class with their cellphones cannot see all their classmates simultaneously, and the picture freezes or stops moving. In addition, cell phone users have fewer chatting facilities that do not support all the “Adobe Connect” features provided by computers. Teacher 8 (an institute teacher) said:



Knowing that you have fewer facilities has negatively affected some learners' confidence levels, and some even stopped coming to online classes.

Conclusions

Some important logical conclusions may be drawn based on the methodology and results of this study. Most students, especially the new students, were satisfied with this platform and type of learning. With the analysis of teachers' interview comments, it was realized that using "Adobe Connect" as the leading online platform for teaching online classes at the university and the private institute had both advantages and disadvantages for teachers. However, the university and institute teachers' ideas were not exactly in line with one another. The institute teachers were primarily satisfied with this platform and considered it as one of the best currently available platforms. The other group, the university teachers, were less satisfied with this platform. They faced some challenges and believed the level of students' learning has decreased because of online teaching, and "Adobe Connect" could not provide the same atmosphere for students as face-to-face courses. According to the interviews, it turned out that one of the reasons that caused this feeling in university teachers was their lack of information about the facilities of this platform and its multiple features. Also, the large number of students in university classes was an essential annoying topic for online teachers. Online platforms including "Adobe Connect" can be beneficial in familiarizing students to new technologies and distance learning considering their different facilities and features. In doing so, teachers and software developers might need to consider the gender, skill level, and other demographic characteristics of students when using or building such platforms which requires both teachers and students have a comprehensive knowledge of the platform and its many features. To benefit the process, directing teachers' performance by a supervisor, as was done in the language institute under investigation, controlling and limiting the number of students and using a solid server can be helpful.

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