



2016). The midterm or final paper-and-pencil exams provide teachers with evidence regarding the effectiveness of their instruction and students' performance. However, when it comes to online distance assessment, as teachers constantly keep complaining about, the supervision power is reduced and the test results might not be trusted. It is argued that the use of webcams can increase the level of monitoring. However, due to financial issues, students cannot be forced to have ready-to-run webcams. The only remedy seems to be in the use of the blended versions of assessment to ensure that what one achieves is truly indicative of his/her knowledge.

The scenarios tend to perpetuate and even more emerge; however, the policy makers and the officials in charge need to sufficiently and effectively address

the issues above as the negligence might bring about disappointment to the practitioners and teachers. For a long time, classrooms have been teachers' heaven but now with the materials, face, voice, and address forms going online, the sense of insecurity might push teachers to believe in their being inhibited by technology. For the time being, sharing experiences and taking new approaches to teacher training courses are argued to be of top priority.

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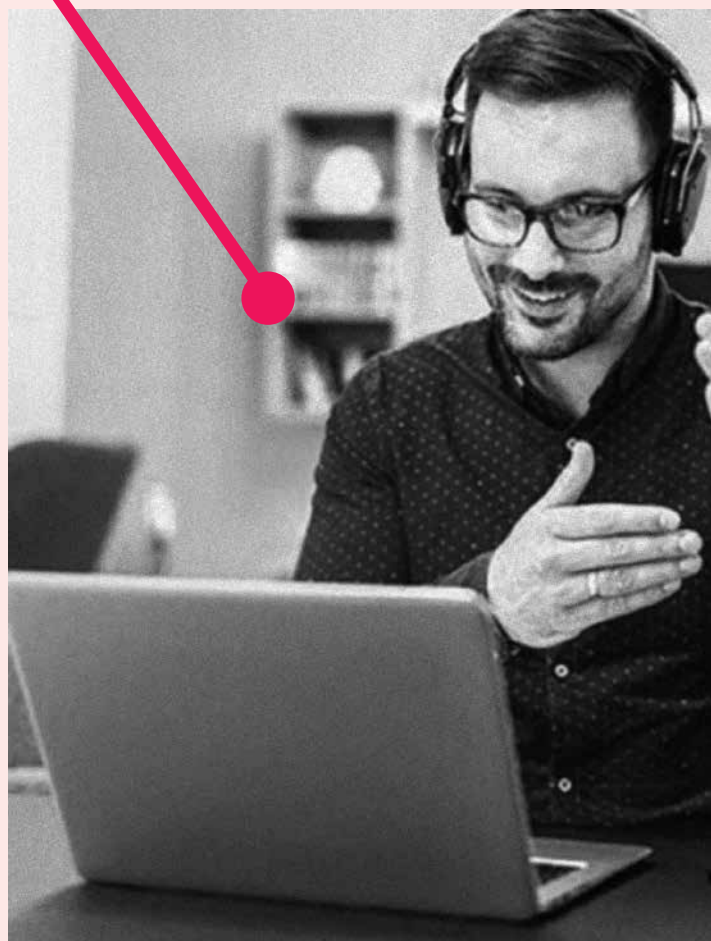
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The need for offering easy access to the saved materials, recording of classroom instructions, and the required learning conditions has bolded some e-learning platforms and has pushed others to the margins (Littlejohn & Pegler, 2007). For example, in Iran, Shaad application, Adobe Connect, different learning management (LMS) services, Skyroom, and BigBlueButton are amongst the most commonly suggested and used e-learning contents in various contexts from K12 to higher education. Those teachers who offer courses at different institutes and schools, as a result, have to gain mastery over a variety of platforms. This can largely affect their sense of effectuality and present itself as a burden.

The feedback received from the users of such platforms demonstrated that, to be productive for users (in our case language teachers) at all grade levels and in different educational contexts, including schools, online language learning platforms: (1) need to lend themselves to continuous evaluation by the users and (2) the one/ones with optimum features should be employed. To satisfy this need, teachers' perceptions on and attitude toward their experiences over the past months are recommended to be explored. To this end, questionnaires might be developed on Likert Scale and help users evaluate the platforms upon their

- ease of use,
- appropriateness for students,
- adaptability for different language learning contexts, and
- productivity for teaching different language skills.

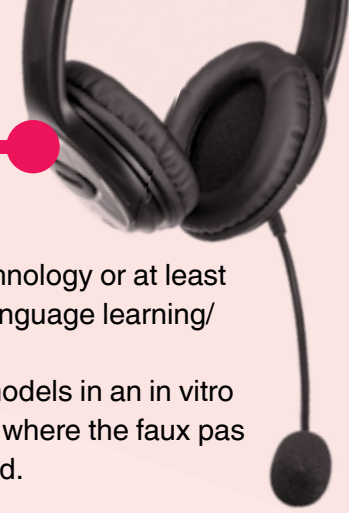
However, the preliminary field observations proved that students and, more commonly, teachers are in a state



of confusion. This can be attributed to fact that a consensus on a standard multi-faceted platform has not been achieved yet and, from time to time, sudden shifts are observed.

Conclusion

Any pedagogical change in an educational context can be considered a potential threat to teachers' face if undermining their crucial role in the classroom (Sharpe, Benfield, & Francis, 2006). In effect, they cannot have all the keys and solutions in hand, especially now that the instructional keys are largely affected by COVID-19 pandemic. In the classroom, in close encounter with the students, the teacher can easily distinguish who outperforms or underperforms the rest and gradually shape a norm for the evaluation of students' progress or regress (Arinto,



The Urge for a Short-Notice Transformation

User's cognitive and technical competency to efficiently utilize technology-induced information and communication in order to look for, have access to, assess and validate, and even create knowledge is referred to as digital literacy (Eryansyah, Erlina, Fiftinova, & Nurweni, 2019).

While it might not be a big challenge for the majority of students, digital literacy presented itself as a serious issue for a large number of teachers who were used to being bound to the once chalk-and-board (and now marker-and-board means of teaching) and having the page-by-page guidelines of course books at their disposal. This problem was more seriously felt at schools or, generally speaking, the K12 context compared to universities and colleges where teachers are more accustomed to conventional language teaching methods and usually do not have the opportunity to attend technology-enhanced language teaching preparation courses.

In order not to fall behind the schedule, teachers were offered crash courses on how to deal with such a transformation in more of a sink-or-swim method, impeding a mature literacy with a full mastery over the details and, accordingly, giving the students an upper hand (Crawford, 1992). The result was as predicted; the interviews with some English language teaching (ELT) educators and teachers revealed that they did not feel secure while going online; i.e. a negative sense of efficacy collapse (Harmer, 2017; Hoang, 2020).

The remedy lies in constant and relevant training and preparation courses and workshops which:

- build up trust in teachers' own potentials,
- engage participants in hands-on

experiences with technology or at least technology-related language learning/teaching tasks, and

- offer successful models in an in vitro experimental context where the faux pas are not harshly treated.

Such preparation can be offered in the form of online real-time classes and/or asynchronous content—such as recorded instructional videos and tutorials and interactive materials—designed for teachers at different grade levels from K12 to higher education. Like other forms of literacies, being a digitally literate individual requires enough training, exposure, and practice to make it gradually, not over a night, perfect.

Inconsistencies in Platforms

In ELT contexts, online teaching/learning platforms promote collaborative language learning approaches wherein teachers are the facilitators of a student-centered environment and students are scaffolded to found/acquire new knowledge based on the skills they have already attained or the knowledge they had from previous instructions (Radia, 2019). Data obtained from interviews has revealed that to satisfy this need, many of the educational institutions (across the globe) have opted for one generic and one or two specific online platforms to better enable teachers and students to integrate themselves in the system. Their choice, however, has been largely shaped and affected by:

- their financial status,
- the Internet quality and speed,
- the user-friendliness of the platform in installation and use, and
- the availability of information technology (IT) supports by local service providers (see Buran & Evseeva, 2015).

Abstract

Technology has its effects on life routines among which teaching and learning processes are of great concern. Once teacher-centered, classroom-oriented, face-to-face educational processes; teaching and learning are now being practiced on indirect computer-/smartphone-assisted internet-based methods not just as a periphery to conventional methods but because of the obligation to make education survive concurrent to Covid-19 pandemic. Despite the merits, the downsides cannot be ignored as the prerequisites for such a change were not duly fulfilled. The current article addresses the scenarios the Iranian EFL practitioners encounter at the time of the outbreak of COVID -19. It is observed that teachers are still in uncertainty and their teaching efficacy has been challenged. The article has implications for teachers, teacher trainers, and educational policymakers.

Keywords: technology, Internet-based teaching, computer-assisted language learning, Covid-19, language teachers

Introduction

Technology, in general, and computers and Internet, in particular, have revolutionized the processes of teaching and learning, especially the foreign and/or second language teaching/learning profession, and for a rather a long time have been employed to facilitate instruction across a variety of contexts (Shadiev & Yang, 2020). Technology, in form of online applications and services, helps learners to complete assigned tasks and/or teachers to offer the course materials in an efficient way (Jin, 2018). A myriad of studies have focused their attention on teaching linguistic skills/subskills namely reading/listening comprehension, pronunciation training/practice, writing and feedback forms, and speaking through the use of technology, here online services (Golonka, Bowles, Frank, Richardson, & Freynik, 2014). A significant body of such research is dedicated to recounting the relative or, at times, significant advantages of these platforms over the routine traditional teaching/learning methods.

Despite this overarching positive tone, there have been arguments against learner-related factors such as the quality and quantity of their learning outputs,

interaction patterns, feedback channels, affective domains, and motivation (Shadiev & Huang, 2019). The absence of a real context has made some critics adopt a rigid stance against virtualization of education and claim the futility of efforts when face-to-face rapport does not exist (Tang, 2019). The outbreak of COVID-19 and the urgency of isolations changed the educational routines at a short notice, shifting technology and online education from a luxury to a necessity. The once supplementary teaching and learning practice turned into the mainstream approach while many teachers, learners, and even trainers were unprepared for such a drastic change. What follows reviews the frequently observed scenarios in in the Iranian 2020 English as a foreign language (EFL) context during the pandemic in which technology-based—not assisted—language learning/teaching is being practiced.

Technology, in general, and computers and Internet, in particular, have revolutionized the processes of teaching and learning, especially the foreign and/or second language teaching



How a Pandemic Affected Iranian EFL Contexts in 2020: A Self Reflection on the Quality of Our Online Teaching Experiences

Mohsen Karrabi

Department of Foreign Languages, Amirkabir University of Technology, Tehran, Iran
m.karrabi@aut.ac.ir

چکیده

فناوری، بر نحوه انجام امور روزمره زندگی تأثیرگذار است که از آن میان، تأثیرش بر فرایندهای تدریس و یادگیری دارای اهمیت زیادی است. این دو فرایند که به صورت معمول مبتنی بر حضور در کلاس با محوریت معلم و تعامل چهره‌به‌چهره بوده‌اند، در حال حاضر در قالب روش‌های غیرمستقیم با استفاده از رایانه و تلفن‌های هوشمند متصل به اینترنت انجام می‌شوند که به دلیل الزامات شرایط شیوع کووید ۱۹، برای بقای آموزش مسیر دیگری متصور نیست. با وجود مزایای فراوان، معایب استفاده ناگهانی و فراگیر آن بدون برآورده کردن پیش‌نیازها، قابل اغماض نیستند. نوشته حاضر، سناریوهای متفاوتی را که معلمان زبان انگلیسی از زمان شیوع کووید ۱۹ با آن‌ها درگیر هستند، مدنظر قرار می‌دهد. با این حال، که معلمان همچنان به فرایند جدید اطمینان ندارند و حس کارایی آن‌ها در تدریس به چالش کشیده شده است. این نوشته حاوی کاربردهایی برای معلمان، تربیت‌کنندگان معلمان، و سیاست‌گذاران آموزشی است.

کلیدواژه‌ها: فناوری، آموزش اینترنت‌محور، زبان‌آموزی به کمک رایانه، کووید ۱۹، آموزگاران زبان