

Emergency Remote English Language Teaching in the Arab League Countries: Challenges and Remedies

Abduljalil Nasr Hazaea (agaleel@gmail.com)
Najran University and Sana'a University, Saudi Arabia

Wagdi Rashad Ali Bin-Hady (wagdyrashad@gmail.com, wagdyrashad@hu.edu.ye)
Hadhramout University, Yemen

Marwa Mekni Toujani (marwaislt@gmail.com)
Interlink International Institutes, Al Yamamah University, Saudi Arabia

Abstract

During the outbreak of Covid-19, emergency remote teaching (ERT) appeared as a hot topic research area. However, ERT remains a general term that needs to be operationalized in specific contexts such as English language teaching (ELT) in the Arab league countries where the classroom challenges and reactions of Arab English language instructors are under-researched. Therefore, this study synthesized ELT with ERT to introduce emergency remote English language teaching (ERELT). It investigates the virtual classroom challenges and the suggested remedies that Arab English language instructors have met while delivering their emergency on-distance lectures. A qualitative research design was followed in which online discussion was conducted on ResearchGate. The data were built from the responses of 19 English language instructors in the Arab league countries. Using grounded theory, the analysis revealed two lines of challenges depending on whether these countries are low-tech or high-tech. In low-tech countries, due to the absence of technological infrastructure, ERELT did not take place. In high-tech countries, the challenges are twofold: technical and pedagogical. The study concludes that syllabus designers and English language lecturers need to incorporate virtual teaching and learning as part and parcel of traditional teaching and learning practices. In low tech countries, traditional media such as television and radio may offer alternative emergency solutions. This article contributes with a bottom-up model for ERELT to pave the way for future research.

Keywords: Challenges, Emergency Remote Teaching, English language teaching, Remedies, Technology of education

Introduction

Although Baran and Correia (2014) called for preparing college instructors for online teaching six years ago, Mardian (2020) reported that both institutions and instructors are still not ready to activate virtual learning. Since March of 2020, Covid-19 has shaken the world in many aspects of life including education. The literature shows that, during this pandemic, the term emergency remote teaching (ERT) has been brought

to the fore with wide importance and concern (Hodges et al., 2020). The term reflects the alternative educational situation caused by Covid-19.

In their review article on ERT, Carrillo and Flores (2020) highlighted the need for a comprehensive view of the pedagogy of ERT that integrates technology to support teaching and learning. Similarly, Onyema et al. (2020) examined the impact of Covid-19 on education in different countries. They stated that during Covid-19 many learners have depended on technology to continue learning. However, some challenges prevented them such as the "poor infrastructures including, network, power, inaccessibility and unavailability issues and poor digital skills." (p. 108). Aboud (2020) also revealed that e-learning affected English language instructors' internal factors like "motivation, attitudes, commitments and autonomy" and other external factors like "school environment and lacking training programs" (p. 26).

Several studies have examined ERT in the field of ELT in different contexts such as China (Davies et al. 2020; Talidong, 2020), Japan (Nae, 2020), Hong Kong (Forrester, 2020), the Philippines (Lansangan, 2020), Singapore (Loo, 2020; Ng, 2020), South Korea (Yi & Jang, 2020), Italy (Aboud, 2020), Colombia (Hernández & Flórez 2020), Greece (Karalis & Raikou, 2020) and Indonesia (Atmojo & Nugroho, 2020) to name a few. Some of these studies have examined the classroom internal challenges such as teacher-student interactions and motivation. The other studies highlighted the classroom's external challenges such as the internet disconnection and technological infrastructure.

Covid-19 pandemic has deeply added insult to the injury of Arab league countries that still suffer from political, economic, and social crises and/or wars. Subsequently, millions of teachers and learners in 22 Arab league countries were prevented from going to their higher-education institutions (UNESCO, 2020). Some institutions tried to apply distance ELT stemming from the slogan as education is right for every person. For example, the Arab Gulf States are well-equipped to find alternative ELT solutions during the outbreak of Covid-19 and to protect their students and instructors through the "stay home" policy (Aldarhami et al., 2020). However, several studies reported that ELT encountered challenges in different Arab league countries during Covid-19 such as (Al Lily et al., 2020; Bin Dahmash, 2020; Ja'ashan, 2020) in Saudi Arabia, (Al-hattami, 2020) in Bahrain, (Farrah & al-Bakry, 2020) in Palestine, and Lassoued et. al, (2020) in different Arab league countries. Although these studies reported some experiences mainly from the students' perspective, there are so many unanswered questions at the micro and macro levels of ELT. The voice of Arab English language instructors needs to be heard. Is it only the instructors' duty to cope with the ERT challenges? Are they qualified and trained enough to be e-facilitators? Can't ELT find a positive side out of this pandemic? In other words, there is a need to study the virtual classroom challenges and reactions of English language instructors during ERT in the Arab league countries.

Theoretically speaking, ERT needs to be operationalized in English language teaching (ELT). Employing grounded theory, this study has introduced the term of emergency remote English language teaching (ERELT). It represents the situation of ELT during the outbreak of Covid-19. Methodologically speaking, research on ERT has employed some qualitative designs and tools. For example, Davies et al. (2020) collected individual accounts of self-reflection from five language teachers. Forrester (2020) used students' and language teachers' feedback, rubrics, and group discussion. Loo (2020) used texts and online materials. Bin Dahmash (2020) employed focus group discussion with EFL students. Aboud (2020) used semi-structured interviews with six language

teachers. Data collection during Covid-19 is a challenge. Academic networks such as ResearchGate and Academia are online official platforms for language teachers and researchers to share and communicate with the academic community. However, it seems that research on ERT has not used these platforms that document authentic rich data about ERT from the perspective of language instructors.

The need to improve the quality of ELT experiences becomes a requirement due to Covid-19, which might continue or the fact that other emergencies could occur anytime. Therefore, this study operationalizes ERELТ in terms of classroom challenges and remedies in the Arab league countries. In so doing, the article reports Arab English language instructors' experiences and reactions during this emergency. Hence, it answers the following questions:

- 1) What are the challenges that face Arab English language instructors during applying ERELТ?
- 2) How did they react to such challenges?

Literature Review

This section revolves around two parts. The first part focuses on ERT in general, and the second one reviews the status quo of ERT in ELТ. In so doing, the review finds out the existing gaps that the present article addresses.

Emergency Remote Teaching (ERT)

ERT can be clearly defined by what it is not as well as what it is. According to Affouneh et al. (2020), ERT is "not usually planned in advance and involves a sudden shift from traditional teaching into a remote one in view of emergency situations like the outbreak of Coronavirus in different countries" (p. 1). ERT is also defined as a temporary alternative and challenging solution in terms of shifting from face to face into online content delivery (Al-hattami, 2020). In more detail, Hodge et al. (2020) define ERT as

a temporary shift of instructional delivery to an alternate delivery mode due to crisis circumstances. ERT involves the use of fully remote teaching solutions for instruction or education that would otherwise be delivered face-to-face or as blended or hybrid courses and that will return to that format once the crisis or emergency has abated (p. 6).

These definitions involve two attributes of teaching as "emergency" and "remote." The term "emergency" reflects unusual situations such as wars, catastrophes, and pandemics. "Remote" represents an on-distance mode of teaching. Therefore, this term generally represents the status of on-distance teaching during the outbreak of Covid-19.

ERT has certain features. First, it is different from online teaching (Hodges et al., 2020). Unlike blended learning, ERT depends on distance teaching (Bozkurt & Sharma, 2020). Second, ERT is flexible in terms of time and place of teaching. It can provide learners even in rural areas with experienced teachers and solutions for their learning problems (Stenman & Pettersson, 2020). Third, ERT provides synchronous and

asynchronous learning modes (Hodges et al., 2020). These features make ERT different from traditional face to face teaching.

ERT and English Language Teaching (ELT)

Several studies on ERT have paid specific attention to classroom internal challenges of ELT. Nae (2020) reported that Japanese EFL teaching lacks the preparedness for tackling the complex problems of ERT including the cultural elements of the Japanese EFL classroom. The study recommended several strategies to engage students and increase their participation rate. Davies et al. (2020) argued that the pandemic poses significant challenges for providing effective English for academic purposes. The study presented a reflective overview of how five individual English courses in China responded to the crisis of the global Covid-19 pandemic. Similarly, Talidong (2020) emphasized the positive outlook, concern for students, and instructional strategies of the teachers in implementing ERT. Loo (2020) recommended that Singaporean EFL instructors should familiarize students of writing with online tools such as Zoom and LMS and encourage university students' confidence while dealing with technology. Ng (2020) called for further research on the interactions between teachers and students. Yi and Jang (2020) showed how ERT influenced ELT in South Korea. They found that ERT has forced language teachers to become more creative and collaborative in their instruction. The study invited researchers to explore new possibilities for English language teaching and learning for post-pandemic education. Hernández and Flórez (2020) found that the role of English teachers in Colombia is significant in ERT.

Other studies contextualized ERT with the classroom external challenges of ELT. In the Philippine context, Lansangan (2020) found that the most challenging of implementation ELT during ERT belonged to the lack of Internet services, other factors belonged to culture resistance and finally associated with the teachers less knowledge in using the Internet. Atmojo and Nugroho (2020) investigated how Indonesian EFL teachers carry out online EFL learning and its challenges. The study found that these teachers employed various online applications and adapted ERT activities based on each school policy. Similarly, Nartiningrum and Nugroho (2020) examined Indonesian EFL students' challenges during ERT. The study found that the main challenges in ERT were the unsteady networks.

In the Arab world, some studies were reported about the classroom challenges of ELT during ERT in some politically and economically stable countries such as Saudi Arabia. Bin Dahmash (2020) explored the benefits and challenges of blended learning during the spread of Covid-19 from the perspective of Saudi EFL students. She reported that language instructors "lack computer literacy and knowledge of online instruction, lack of facilities to implement online instruction and lack of interaction in online language-teaching courses" (p. 3). Ja'ashan (2020) also studied the challenges of applying E-learning to EFL students at a Saudi University. The study revealed academic, administrative, and technical challenges. Al Lily et al., (2020) questioned the implications of ERT with specific attention to the Arab culture. Analyzing social media posts, pedagogical implications were found such as unreadiness, incompetence that hinder ELT. Closer to the Saudi context, Al-hattami (2020) investigated the effectiveness of the shift to the e-teaching and learning in general and the implementation of e-assessment among

college instructors in Bahrain. Farrah and al-Bakry (2020) assessed classroom challenges and solutions among Palestinian EFL students. The study showed a need to change and improve the quality of e-learning both from top-down such as improving the technological infrastructure and bottom-up such as teachers' training. Similarly, Lassoued et. al. (2020) studied the obstacles of ERT from the perspective of lecturers and students in four Arab countries. The study found that lecturers faced self-imposed obstacles, as well as educational, technical, and financial obstacles. These reviewed studies did not report the classroom challenges that ELT during ERT encountered in other Arab unstable countries such as Yemen and Libya. Therefore, this study seeks to fill in this existing gap in the literature by examining classroom challenges and solutions of ELT during ERT in the Arab league countries with various economic, political, and social conditions.

Materials and Methods

This study followed a grounded theory design in which researchers use systematic and qualitative procedures to purposively select the participants, to generate themes, and to explain a process, action, or interaction among the selected participants (Creswell, 2012). In purposeful sampling, "researchers intentionally select individuals and sites to learn or understand the central phenomenon" (Creswell, 2012, p. 206). An open question was posted on the *ResearchGate* platform. It states "What are the challenges that English language instructors face during activating emergency remote teaching (ERT) because of the outbreak of Covid-19? And what are the remedies that you have invented to cope with such challenges? English language instructors who teach in the Arab league countries were invited to participate in the discussion forum. They were also asked about their informed consent to use their opinions in this research study.

Participants

The participants of this qualitative study were 19 English language instructors from some Arab league countries. The participants were chosen based on the criteria of qualification, teaching experience in higher education, proficiency level of their learners, teaching at different Arab countries with different economic and technological infrastructure. Accordingly, the participants held Ph.D. in English/Applied linguistics. They also teach English in Arab league countries such as Saudi Arabia, Oman, Algeria, Tunisia, Jordan, Libya, and Yemen. They used to teach in physical classrooms, but as the pandemic outbreaks, some of them shifted to online teaching as their new experience. Some of them teach in high-tech countries, and others teach in low-tech countries. They teach the English language to undergraduate students. Further information about these participants is elaborated in a detailed table (see Appendix).

Data Building

In qualitative grounded research, data can be built rather than collected. To build the data from Arab English language instructors and during the pandemic, *ResearchGate* is found to be the most suitable platform for posting instructors' online academic discussion. In this regard, Edi et al. (2017) reported that *ResearchGate* is one of the academic networks used by academics and researchers to communicate, collaborate, and

share articles and post questions through the discussion forum. It is a platform that provides valid and authentic data through ‘member checking’ (Birt et. al, 2016). In this written platform, the participants have the facility to discuss and share academic issues.

An open question was formed to generate the challenges that Arab English language instructors have encountered while employing ERT during the outbreak of Covid-19 and the remedies that are required to solve such challenges. The question was sent to referees to check its content validity. After getting some valuable comments from the referees, the question was reformed and developed. Next, the question was posted on *ResearchGate* and shared with English language instructors who teach in the Arab league countries. The same question was also shared with other instructors who use *Facebook*, and their responses were posted in the *Researchgate* discussion. During data building, the analysis was conducted through thematic analysis.

The question was posted on June 4, 2020, and the researchers used primary close readings for analyzing the responses. In so doing, the researchers also interacted in the online discussion to keep it within the scope of the main open question. After two months of discussion, the data was built. Finally, the responses were copied, pasted, and coded in MS Word document for data analysis.

Procedures for Data Analysis

Data building and data analysis are iterative in grounded research. The collected data were analyzed according to grounded theory steps as suggested by Chun Tie et al. (2019). First, the participants were purposefully selected. Next, a discussion question was used to collect the written data from participants. Constant movements were conducted between data collection and data analysis. During these processes, the data were initially coded into categories (i.e. category identification), the valuable data were then coded into categories and subcategories using both open and axial coding. Third, intermediate coding in this time was processed by selecting the core category from the category identification, (data saturation). The coding was finally processed into theoretical coding (advanced coding) and a model was generated.

The data were analyzed through the close reading. To generate themes, the sentence was mainly used as the unit of analysis. Then, excerpts were used as an organizational tool to present each theme. A coding system was used where the abbreviation (Part. N) was used to anonymously report the participants. “Part.” stands for participant and “N” for sequence number (see Appendix).

Analysis and Findings

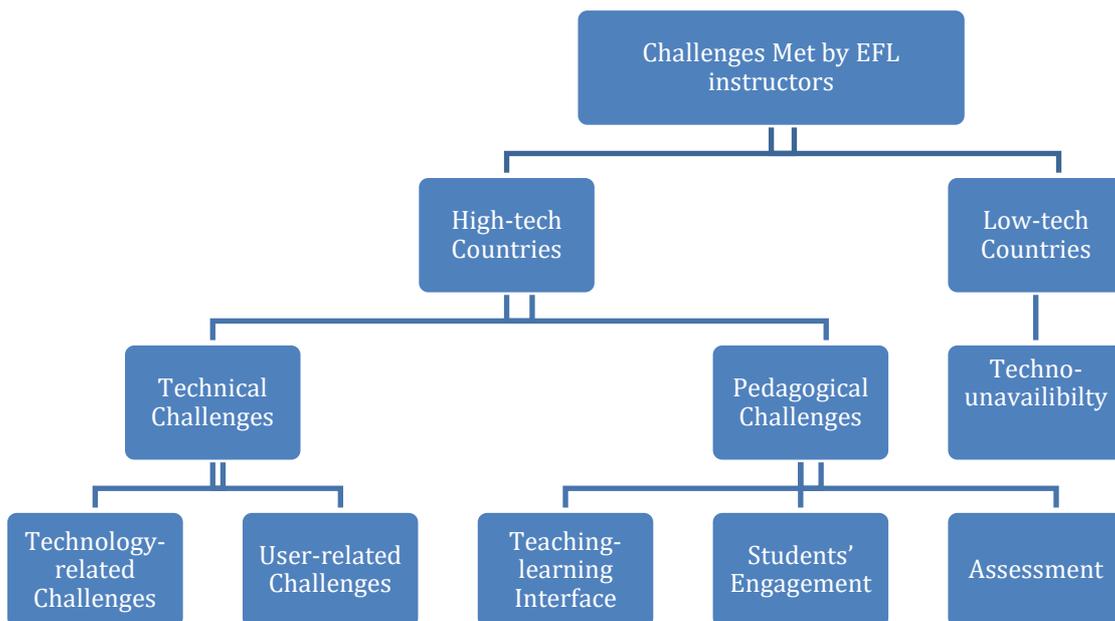
Guided by the procedures for data analysis, the findings are organized based on the research questions.

Challenges During EREL T

The first research question is about deciphering the challenges that the participants encountered during the EREL T experience. The present findings demonstrate that the challenges fell into two overarching themes with related sub-themes for the second theme.

The two identified themes are: (a) challenges in low-tech countries, and (b) challenges in high-tech countries, with the sub-themes of technical as well as pedagogical challenges (Figure 1).

Figure 1
Challenges met during ERELТ



The findings show that challenges differ from one context to another. On the one hand, in low-tech countries such as Yemen and Libya, the challenges are related to techno-unavailability. That is the unavailability of power supply, the technological infrastructure required for applying virtual classrooms, the Internet service, and the lack of smartphones. These challenges have resulted in suspending the learning process during the spread of Covid-19 as evident in Excerpt 1.

Excerpt 1

“in underdeveloped countries, there is no way even to think of E-learning as [there is] no electricity, very few students and teachers who own devices for online learning” (Part. 2).

“many students live in villages where the internet service unfortunately is not available” (Part. 3).

“most of the Yemeni students as well as teachers cannot afford smartphones or laptops” (Part. 12).

“in Yemen, the most challenging problems are the lack of power supply” (part. 18)

“this [ERELТ] doesn't apply to the Libyan context as we did not teach remotely ...all schools are closed and no teaching is delivered” (Part. 21).

In Excerpt 1, the participants reported that there is no chance for ERT to be conducted in some Arab countries such as Yemen and Libya. Words like *no electricity*, *lack of power supply*, *cannot afford*, and *this doesn't apply to the Libyan context* indicate that both Yemen and Libya lack the basic educational technology and that ERELТ did not take place in these low-tech countries. Thus, as the above participants reported, the challenges in low-tech countries are only discussed under the lack of the technological infrastructure because they did not apply ERELТ during the Covid-19 lockdown. Hence, the challenges that English language instructors encountered while applying ERELТ were reported by participants who taught in high-tech countries.

On the other hand, high-tech countries, such as Saudi Arabia and Jordan, faced several challenges that can be categorized into technical and pedagogical challenges. High-tech countries indeed have the technological infrastructure and facilities, yet they still suffer from some technical challenges during the application of ERELТ as reported by the majority of participants. In these countries, the technical challenges revolve around technology-related issues and user-related issues as shown in Excerpt 2.

Excerpt 2

“Moreover, some challenges are streaming from the use of technology itself and its strategies alike, the deficiency of the net service and the constant disconnections almost hinder the pedagogical progression via platforms” (Part. 1).

“Some courses need some requirements and facilities which were not available in virtual learning” (Part. 5).

“I have faced some challenges. For example: - Breakdowns of mobile phones or computers during the classes” (Part. 10).

“Technical challenges include slow internet connections, disconnection, presentation skills. There were also problems with browsers” (Part. 14).

“Some courses need some requirement and facilities which were not available in virtual leaning” (Part. 15).

“Preparing a virtual lesson is technically more difficult...Some lessons were announced then cancelled...the younger the teacher the more he is better coping with virtual teaching” (Part.4).

“Many students use their smartphones but not able to interact with some virtual classes such as writing and quizzes and assignments” (Part. 14).

In Excerpt 2, the participants reported that technology-related challenges include “the deficiency of the net service,” “slow internet connections [and] disconnection,” “breakdowns of mobile phones or computers during the classes,” and problems with browsers.” The expression *“some requirements and facilities not available in virtual learning”* shows that some universities are not fully ready to adopt virtual learning. Concerning user-related challenges, the participants addressed the issue that both instructors and students suffer from digital illiteracy. Instructors struggled to prepare their courses as *preparing a virtual lesson is technically more difficult*. This challenge was accentuated by the age factor as *the younger [the] better coping with virtual teaching*. The expressions *not able to interact with some virtual classes* revealed students’ digital illiteracy.

Pedagogical challenges comprise teaching-learning interface, students' engagement, and students' assessment. Excerpt 3 summarizes the challenges reported by instructors about the teaching-learning processes.

Excerpt 3

“I think the most crucial challenge is the absence of real situations. Though such platforms provide suitable solutions for this pandemic outbreaks but the situations lack real communication” (Part. 1).

“Teaching online is much slower. Things seem to take much longer to do and you don't tend to get through as much content in an online lesson as you do in a face to face class. -This is a big challenge as we really need to help our students to be more autonomous and to engage both in the live session but also to work outside the lesson. To bring a live session together in an online platform, we need the students to have prepared and done activities before the lesson. -Planning and pedagogy are missing” (Part. 6).

“Pedagogical challenges include preparing materials, such as ppt,...teaching strategies are also another challenge” (Part. 14).

“Furthermore, most of our teaching during the pandemic concentrated on the theoretical aspects of the language at the expense of the language skills, which were enormously neglected” (Part. 20).

From Excerpt 3, it can be deduced that the English language instructors faced pedagogical challenges. For instance, the expressions *challenges include preparing materials, such as ppt, planning and pedagogy are missing, teaching strategies are also another challenge* reveal that preparing materials became problematic in the virtual context and applying the teaching strategies used in the traditional EFL teaching/learning context became also insufficient during EREL. Additionally, the reported expressions *"absence of real situations" and "lack of real communication"* show that the authenticity as well as communication, which are the bases of the EFL teaching modern approaches, were missed in the virtual experience. This results in changing the EFL teaching approach from being interactive and communicative into *theoretical as it concentrated on the theoretical aspects of the language at the expense of the language skills*.

The current participants were also concerned with student engagement. That is to say, they reflected on how students perceived and/or reacted to information in these online contexts. Lack of engagement in virtual teaching was reported in Excerpt 4.

Excerpt 4

“The interaction between instructors and students was very low and also the absence of enthusiasm which is available in classroom” (Part. 5).

“Some students were careless in attending the online classes. In some cases, the tasks could be answered by some friends of the students (not the students themselves)” (Part. 10).

“....lack of interactions with students and among students themselves....” (Part. 14).

In Excerpt 4, the reported expressions “*absence of enthusiasm*” and “*careless*”, showed that EFL students were not highly motivated during the ERELТ experience. The claim that *[T]he tasks could be answered by some friends of the students (not the students themselves)* also revealed students were not autonomous enough as they depended on others to do their tasks. Thus, it can be predicted that students were not taking responsibility for their learning and that they have not reached the required level of autonomy.

Students' assessment is the last pedagogical challenge met by English language instructors in this study. Excerpt 5 presents the current participants' perspective on virtual assessment during ERELТ.

Excerpt 5

“the notion of something like continuous assessment, where students are essentially rewarded for being physically present, also becomes less tenable. Evidence that the student is beginning to catch on to how to study or learn successfully becomes more of an additional task for a teacher to impute, rather than a reflected written production to interpret” (Part. 9).

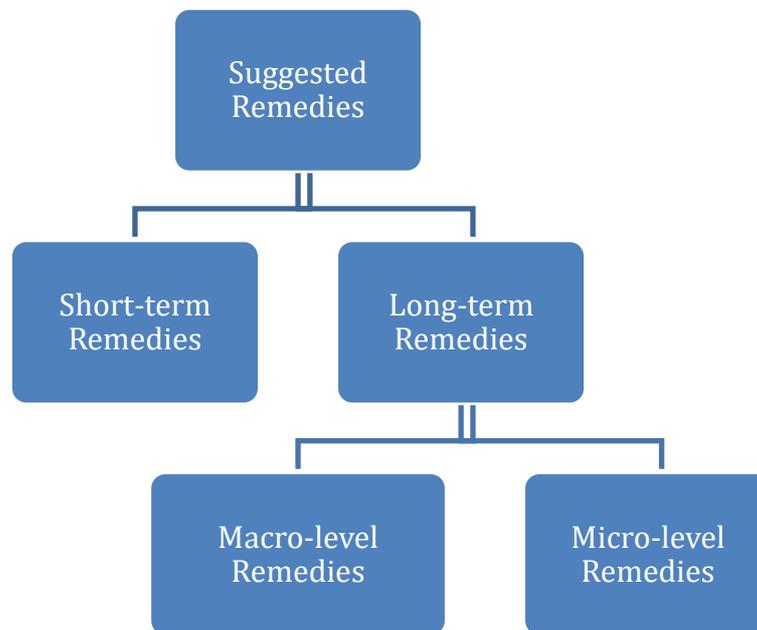
Excerpt 5 shows that assessing students became a burden. It became “*less tenable*” and the ability to judge whether learning was taking place became tougher. The fact that students as explained in Excerpt 5 relied on others to do their tasks reduced the reliability of the assessment.

Suggested Remedies during ERELТ

The second research question focuses on the remedies to solve the identified challenges. The present findings illustrate that the remedies fell into two themes with related sub-themes. The two identified themes are: (a) short-term remedies and (b) long-term remedies, with the sub-themes of macro-level remedies and micro-level remedies (Figure 2).

Figure 2

Suggested Remedies



The close readings of the participants' responses reveal some solutions that the English language instructors may apply during the ERELТ experience to leverage the resources they had. Collaboration and leveraging the existing resources constitute the mark of that period as illustrated in Excerpt 6.

Excerpt 6

“Recorded lectures were sometimes preferred to live ones..... name an assistant to do it my place” (Part. 4).

“To bring a live session together in an online platform, we need the students to have prepared and done activities before the lesson. -Planning and pedagogy are missing” (Part. 6).

“We used to observe our recorded virtual classes and improve our teaching strategies, delivered content and interactions” (Part.14).

In Excerpt 6, the participants reported that they resorted to *recorded lectures and* relied on their junior colleagues to teach instead of them. These expressions *we used to observe our recorded virtual classes and improve our teaching strategies* shows that constructive feedback and collaboration improved the ERELТ experience.

The micro-level remedies and the macro-level remedies fall within the long-term remedies (i.e., the remedies that the participants aspire to). The findings show that the macro-level remedies, in low-tech countries and high-tech countries, concern the governmental and the language learning bodies. Moving from techno-unavailability to techno-availability as well as improving their techno-efficiency should improve the ERELТ experience. Raising awareness, empowering instructors and students, and providing learning management systems are also among the suggested solutions as is evident in Excerpt 7.

Excerpt 7

“the burden falls on the Universities and educational institutions to raise-awareness among students and train academic staff on the effective use of electronic platforms that provide the service” (Part. 3).

“The universities and schools that usually use online learning management systems are at an advantage. Instructors usually use these interfaces to connect with students and to post course materials. Such learning method could be also used hand in hand with traditional teaching when things go back to normal” (Part. 7).

“Solutions lie in supporting the teachers academically and financially to defeat the situation and have efficient outcomes in their teachings these days” (Part. 8).

“Three main things a distance education needs: a mandatory schedule and curriculum, internet with high speed and a device” (Part. 19).

“they [instructors] need a path to continue the procedure of teaching through the E-learning system which is beneficial for the students and they got much important information from in especially from the Zoom app which is one of the popular apps in learning teaching” (Part. 20).

In Excerpt 7, expressions such as *“internet with high speed and a device”*, and *“this requires a good internet connection”* show that EFL institutions should be supported with the technological infrastructure to handle virtual learning. Moreover, empowering instructors in the ERELТ experience could be achieved through *supporting [them] academically and financially through [training] academic staff and ensuring a mandatory schedule and curriculum*. The remedies can come from the educational institutions themselves when they invest in *their online learning management systems* if they exist or develop ones if they have not already had these platforms. Incorporating online teaching with traditional face-to-face teaching is one of the remedies suggested. Raising students' awareness of the importance of ERELТ could be of help.

The current results show that the micro-level remedies, in low-tech countries and high-tech countries, concern with instructors' roles as is evident in Excerpt 8.

Excerpt 8

“Therefore, instructors might invest more time trying to help students cope with this change psychologically” (Part. 7).

“teachers[need] to become more abreast with technology as well as develop digital literacy to deliver the skill and content needed to achieve the learning outcomes in all courses” (Part. 17).

These remedies are related to instructors' digital illiteracy and the humanitarian teacher-student rapport.

Discussion

The current study aimed at gauging how EFL instructors in the Arab League countries experienced ERELТ during the Covid-19 crisis with specific attention to challenges and remedies. The first research question explored the challenges they faced. It was found that the challenges depended on the technological development in these

countries. In low-tech countries, the study reported challenges related to the lack of infrastructure like the unavailability of the Internet service, power supply, lack of technological infrastructure needed for online teaching to take place. Therefore, in countries, like Yemen and Libya, the education process is postponed. This finding is congruent with Onyema et al. (2020) who reported that online education, in general, was hindered due to "poor infrastructures including, network, power, inaccessibility and unavailability issues (p. 108). The lack of the Internet challenge was also reported by Lansangan (2020) who investigated chemistry instruction during ERT and by Al Lily et al. (2020) who issued that "some Arab contexts may be digitally readier than non-Arab contexts" (p. 1).

The current findings revealed that ERELТ took place in high-tech countries with some hindrance. The challenges reported are both technical and pedagogical. This is in line with Ja'ashan's (2020) finding that the challenges of applying E-Learning to EFL students at the Saudi university could be categorized into technical, academic (i.e., pedagogical), and administrative. One of the pitfalls of the ERELТ experience that the current results highlighted are students' and teachers' digital illiteracy. This finding coincides with Bin Dahmash (2020) who found that technological problems are among the challenges that EFL students at King Saud University faced. The same finding is also confirmed by Lansangan (2020), Rahiem (2020), and Onyema et al. (2020, p. 108) who stressed the idea that "poor digital skills" reduced the effectiveness of the ERELТ experience. For instance, Rahiem (2020), who explored the attitudes of students from the Social Science Education Program at a public university in Jakarta on emergency remote learning, reported that "students talked about the technical barriers that hindered their learning due to technical problems or the inability to use technological resources" (p. 19). She attributed the technical challenge to "the unusual use of technology in teaching and learning programs" (pp.19-20).

Besides, the present study revealed that both students' assessment and lack of resources were problematic during the ERELТ experience. These findings are in line with Bin Dahmash (2020) and Rahiem (2020). Therefore, it seems that both English language instructors (the current study's participants) and EFL students (participants of Bin Dahmash (2020) and Rahiem (2020)) share the same perspective. Rahiem (2020) concluded that what reinforced the ERT pedagogic challenges the fact that courses were prepared for traditional learning, and that students were not able to study independently. Students' characteristics were also tackled in Nae (2020) who reported the effect of the abrupt transition from traditional classroom learning to online learning in the Japanese context. She described Japanese students as "more group conscious, prefer group activities and are less likely to request clarification and more wary of making mistakes because they fear embarrassment in front of the group" (p. 2) and she found that these "cultural particularities" are challenged during the ERT experience (p. 2).

EFL instructors' un-readiness for such change was also among the pedagogical obstacles reported in this study. The same finding was also reported by EFL students in Bin Dahmash's study (2020). Lastly, the current results showed that the language learning institutions were not well-equipped to support the ERELТ experience. This is confirmed by Mardian (2020) who stated that institutions are not ready to activate virtual learning and Rahiem (2020) who found that "university and its community were not well prepared to face an emergency, such as the closure of the campus due to a pandemic" (p. 19). Even though Dashtestani (2014) and Alamir (2016) conducted their studies on virtual

teaching/learning before ERT, their results still apply to the current situation. In Dashtestani's (2014) study, it is also found that language teachers "lack computer literacy and knowledge of online instruction, lack of facilities to implement online instruction and lack of interaction in online language-teaching courses" (p. 3). However, Alamir's (2016) results indicated that Saudi EFL instructors interacted more with their students in-online environment contradict the present results as in this study, it was reported that the ERT experience reduced teacher-student interaction. Alamir's (2016) results could also resonate with those of Hernández and Flórez (2020) as their participants stressed the idea that "synchronous exchanges foster and maintain students' motivation levels high because it is the best to interact, provide guidance and feedback simultaneously" (p. 165).

The current study also sought to explore the remedies needed to solve the identified challenges. Based on the current findings, these remedies were considered either short-term remedies (i.e., on the spot remedies) or long-term remedies. The ERELТ experience enabled the instructors surveyed in the current study to suggest practical solutions to reduce the power of the challenges met. This approach was also observed in other studies on ERT (e.g., Al-hattami, 2020; Loo, 2020; Yi & Jang, 2020). Lansangan (2020) suggested a method that helped him during his online chemistry teaching experience. This method could be summarised in the acronym "REACH OUT: Reinventing the wheel; Exploring the possibilities; Aligning to core essentials; Creating a learning routine; Hooking students online meaningfully; Offering consistent means of communication; Using authentic and reflective assessments; and Trusting the process" (p. 20).

The unavailability of technological infrastructure was the main problem in low-tech countries; therefore, it needed macro-level radical solutions. It was suggested that authorities should find solutions for this plight. At the same level come internet and device-related issues and using online platforms. Finding materials and assessment tools that can be applied in both conventional teaching and online teaching and engaging students are among the micro-level solutions. The current study reported that universities should raise students' and instructors' awareness of using online teaching. This suggested remedy is confirmed by Aboud's (2020) findings that the "educational policies should provide more technology-related training programs" for teachers "to increase teachers' motivation in their teaching practices" (p. 26). The current findings suggested the importance of integrating virtual teaching with normal face to face teaching so that it would not be challenging during crisis times. This finding is congruent with Talidong (2020) whose findings suggested that "the importance of instructional strategies in implementing remote teaching, notwithstanding the abrupt changes in the face of education" (p. 196).

Most of the findings of the present study concerning the challenges and remedies are fully consistent with Atmojo and Nugroho (2020), Farrah and al-Bakry (2020), Lassoued et al. (2020), and Nartiningrum and Nugroho (2020). However, the subsequent discussion will focus on Farrah and al-Bakry (2020) and Lassoued et al. (2020) as they are more pertinent to the present context (The Arab league countries). Farrah and al-Bakry (2020) investigated ERELТ in the Palestinian context using a qualitative methodology. They found that the challenges are summarized in "the lack of technical support that the universities have, the need for training lecturers to improve their technological skills, the unreliable evaluation system, and the poor technological infrastructure" (p. 75). Similar to the current results, they suggested "training students and teachers, using critical and

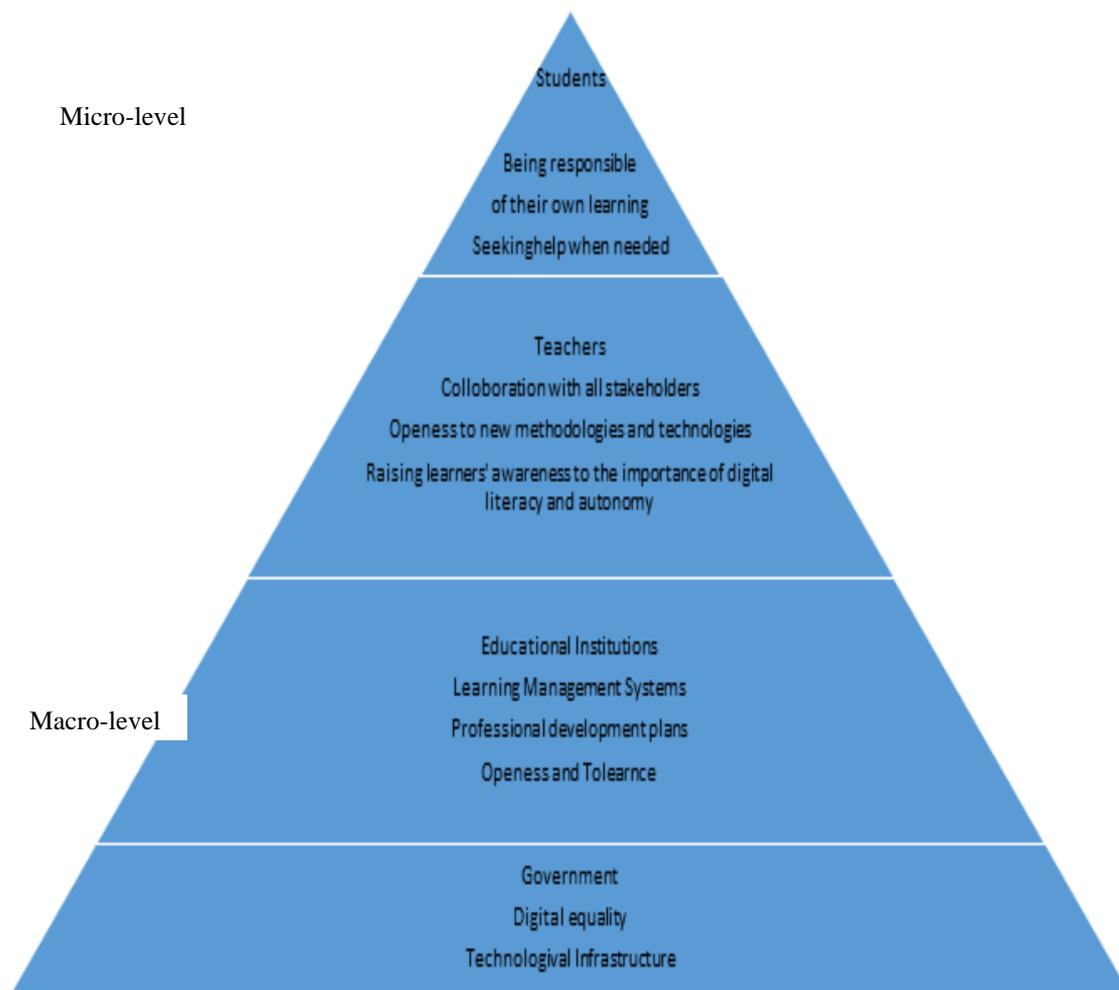
oral exams, improving an observing attendance system, identifying the technical situation of students, and strengthening the internet infrastructure” as solutions (p. 75). In the same line, Lassoued et al. (2020) confirmed the same challenges and recommendations investigating ERT in Algerian, Egyptian, Palestinian, and Iraqi universities using a quantitative methodology. Hence, using a qualitative methodology, the current findings consolidate the previous results on ERT and ERELТ in the Arabic league countries. This reveals the consistency of challenges in the region and agreement between researchers in the region that there are solutions to overcome these challenges in future circumstances.

What can be deduced from the discussion is that ERELТ challenges are not specific to the ELТ. The ERT studies reported here showed that in case there is no technological infrastructure and a good internet connection, ERT will occur neither with English nor chemistry courses. They also show that conventional face-to-face teaching strategies, assessments, and materials should be adapted before using them online. Adding to that, the participants, whether instructors or students, addressed the same issues (i.e., digital illiteracy, low performance, students’ demotivation, etc.). Lastly, they all agree on the importance of collaboration between all the stakeholders to ensure the effectiveness of the ERELТ experience. This argument leads to the fact that ERELТ uncovered pitfalls that have been hidden in conventional teaching. Therefore, a need to rethink the interrelationship between teaching-learning stakeholders has become a requisite, which is also advocated by Carrillo and Flores (2020).

The rationale for this study was to describe ERELТ reality to look for future solutions. The need to improve the quality of future ERELТ experiences becomes a requisite because Covid-19 could continue or the fact that other emergencies could occur anytime. Therefore, it is highly recommended to develop an ERELТ model that could be followed when needed to help leverage the challenges and to turn ERELТ into a positive experience. The following pyramid model (Figure 3) is developed based on the current results, an extrapolation from the aforementioned discussed literature, and Bao’s (2020) educational strategies “to improve student concentration and engagement to achieve a smooth transition to online learning” (Rahiem, 2020, p. 20).

Figure 3

Bottom-up model for effective learning and teaching during ERELТ



The success of any EREL T experience relies on the collaboration of the different stakeholders (i.e., government, educational institutions, teachers, and students). It is a bottom-up process with a macro-level and micro-level. The macro-level concerns the governmental and educational bodies. The micro-level concerns instructors and students. At the very bottom comes the role of governments. They should firstly provide ground technological infrastructure, emphasize digitalization through working on digital and social equality strategies and ensure that the Internet connection is accessible to everyone and speedy. The absence of technological devices and the internet in countries such as Yemen and Libya have made EREL T impossible. EFL students were unable to continue their learning the way their peers in high-tech countries did.

The second level is about educational institutions. Firstly, educational institutions should have online learning management systems (e.g., LMS, Moodle, MOOC, Blackboard) and should reinforce their uses. These systems are of help when an emergency, such as Covid-19, occurs as both students and learners will find themselves both digitally equipped and adept. Secondly, educational institutions should provide instructors with professional development targeting digital literacy, especially the older ones. Based on the current study's results, age is one of the predicaments as the older the instructors are, the less adept they are in technology. Professional development can also focus on online pedagogy, the use of materials, and online assessment. Thirdly,

educational institutions should provide instructors with any technical support needed and should help them solve the problems they may meet. These problems are either related to technology or learners. If a chosen online platform proved to be flawed, the universities should be open to change and look for another alternative. Finally, educational institutions should also work out an online teaching-learning policy that regulates the learning process. For instance, universities could reinforce attendance policy and camera usage. This will allow both instructors and students to interact more efficiently. In his set principles, Boa (2020) referred to the importance of body language and facial expressions in learning and suggested that voice and speech rate modulation could be of help. Reinforcing camera usage could solve such a dilemma.

The third level, which is the first micro-level stage, concerns English language instructors of the Arab world themselves. The present results showed that some instructors used such situation as leverage. They increased their collaborations with each other and they used self-reflection methods to increase the quality of their teaching. These tools should be reinforced in traditional teaching. English language Instructors in the Arab world, with the support of their institutions, can also alternate between traditional teaching, blended learning, and online teaching when life goes back to normal. It is also highly recommended that they develop their professional development plans and be more open to learn new methodologies and not refrain from implementing new teaching strategies. Finally, English language Instructors in the Arab world should be more aware of their facilitating role. They are recommended to raise their learners' awareness of the importance of digital literacy. The present study confirmed that even though the 21st-century learners are so attached to their digital devices; they are indeed unable to use them for learning. Therefore, suggesting classroom activities or projects that rely heavily on the use of online learning platforms and that raise learners' autonomy becomes a requisite.

At the top of the pyramid comes the learner who is the most important part of the teaching-learning equation. Once their instructors raise their awareness about the importance of digital literacy, they should develop learning strategies and plans that enable them to be responsible for their learning. They should attend their lectures and interact with the materials taught as well as their instructors. Finally, it is recommended that they seek both psychological and pedagogical help from their instructors when needed.

Still, this model could be further upgraded based on future research that explores the ERELТ area taking into consideration other stakeholders such as students, administrators, and managers.

Conclusions

This study reported the challenges that English language instructors in the Arab world encountered while pursuing ERELТ during the Covid-19 pandemic. The challenges were reported according to two different settings in high-tech and low-tech countries. On the one hand, the lack of infrastructures such as power supply, the internet, and the unavailability of devices constitute the challenges in low-tech countries like Yemen and Libya. On the other hand, the challenges in high-tech countries like the Gulf countries revolve around techno-efficiency and pedagogy. The study also suggested some of the remedies required to pursue virtual learning in terms of short-term and long-term

remedies. The former utilizes the existed resources to indulge in virtual learning/teaching, whereas the latter is concerned with solutions to be provided by the government and the institutions themselves. This paper contributes to the ERT literature and encourages upcoming research to explore the implementation of the ERELТ model once needed.

Every study has some limitations, and this study has its limitations in terms of method and sampling. This study pursued a qualitative research design. It would be better if the study used a mixed-methods research design in which both qualitative and quantitative data are collected and analyzed. Moreover, the study used a discussion question to collect the data, it would be richer if the study used an interview to collect the data in which the researcher could ask many in-depth questions to get his/her query from the interviewees. Finally, the study used purposive sampling which may not be a valid representation for the 22 Arab league countries. The study did not get responses from some Arab countries including Egypt, Sudan, Palestine, Lebanon, and Syria.

The findings of this study are of great importance for English language instructors, syllabus designers, and educators. They can get benefit from the challenges and remedies to imply virtual teaching/learning as part of their face-to-face routines in their lectures so that instructors and students can be ready for any future crisis which necessitates the application of ERELТ. Further studies are recommended to explore the validity of the ERELТ suggested a model in this research for teaching the four language skills and subsystems. Moreover, the findings call for employing ERELТ in low-tech countries by integrating traditional media such as television and radio with ELТ. In this case, the challenges caused by a lack of internet connection can be avoided.

References

- About, F. (2020). The effect of E: Learning on EFL teacher identity. *International Journal of English Research*, 6(2), 22–27. <http://www.englishjournals.com/archives/2020/vol6/issue2/6-1-37>
- Affounh, S., Salha, S., & Khlaif, Z. N. (2020). Designing quality E-Learning environments for emergency remote teaching in Coronavirus crisis. *Interdisciplinary Journal of Virtual Learning in Medical Sciences*, 11(2), 1–3.
- Al-hattami, A. A. (2020). E-Assessment of students' performance during the E-teaching and learning. *International Journal of Advanced Science and Technology*, 29(8), 1537–1547.
- Alamir, A. (2016). Exploring the interactions and perceptions of EFL instructors in the Saudi online learning environment. *Arab World English Journal*, 7(1), 160–177. <http://doi.org/10.24093/awej/vol7no1.11>
- Aldarhami, A., Bazaid, A. S., Althomali, O. W., & Binsaleh, N. K. (2020). Public perceptions and commitment to social distancing “Staying-at-Home” during COVID-19 pandemic: A national survey in Saudi Arabia. *International Journal of General Medicine*, 13, 677.
- Al Lily, A. E., Ismail, A. F., Abunasser, F. M., & Alqahtani, R. H. A. (2020). Distance education as a response to pandemics: Coronavirus and Arab culture. *Technology in society*, 63, 101317. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.techsoc.2020.101317>

- Atmojo, A. E. P., & Nugroho, A. (2020). EFL classes must go online! Teaching activities and challenges during COVID-19 pandemic in Indonesia. *Register Journal*, 13(1), 49-76. <https://doi.org/10.18326/rgt.v13i1.49-76>
- Bao, W. (2020). COVID -19 and online teaching in higher education: A case study of Peking University. *Human Behavior and Emerging Technologies*, 2(2), 113-115. <https://doi.org/10.1002/hbe2.191>
- Baran, E., & Correia, A. P. (2014). A professional development framework for online teaching. *TechTrends*, 58(5), 95–101. <http://doi.org/10.1007/s11528-014-0791-0>
- Bin Dahmash, N. (2020). ‘I couldn’t join the session’: Benefits and challenges of blended learning amid Covid-19 from EFL students. *International Journal of English Linguistics*, 10 (5) 221-230. <https://doi.org/10.5539/ijel.v10n5p221>
- Birt, L., Scott, S., Cavers, D., Campbell, C., & Walter, F. (2016). Member checking: A tool to enhance trustworthiness or merely a nod to validation? *Qualitative Health Research*, 26(13), 1802-1811. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1049732316654870>
- Bozkurt, A., & Sharma, R. C. (2020). Emergency remote teaching in a time of global crisis due to coronavirus pandemic. *Asian Journal of Distance Education*, 15(1), 1–6. <http://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.3778083>
- Carrillo, C., & Flores, M. A. (2020). COVID-19 and teacher education: a literature review of online teaching and learning practices. *European Journal of Teacher Education*, 43(4), 466-487. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02619768.2020.1821184>
- Chun Tie, Y., Birks, M., & Francis, K. (2019). Grounded theory research: A design framework for novice researchers. *SAGE Open Medicine*, 7, 1–8. <http://doi.org/10.1177/2050312118822927>
- Creswell, J. W. (2012). *Educational research: planning, conducting, and evaluating quantitative and qualitative research* (4th ed.). Pearson Education.
- Dashtestani, R. (2014). English as a foreign language-teachers’ perspectives on implementing online instruction in the Iranian EFL context. *Research in Learning Technology*, 22. <http://doi.org/10.3402/rlt.v22.20142>
- Davies, J. A., Davies, L. J., Conlon, B., Emerson, J., Hainsworth, H., & McDonough, H. G. (2020) Responding to Covid-19 in EAP contexts: A Comparison of courses at four Sino-Foreign Universities. *International Journal of TESOL Studies*, 2 (2) 32-51. <https://doi.org/10.46451/ijts.2020.09.04>
- Edi, S. N., Djati, K., I Made, W., & Tubagus, M. K. (2017). Researchgate data analysis to measure the strength of Indonesian research. *Far East Journal of Electronics and Communications*, 17(5), 1177-1183.
- Farrak, M., & al-Bakry, G. H. (2020). Online learning for EFL students in Palestinian universities during corona pandemic: Advantages, challenges, and solutions. *Indonesian Journal of Learning and Instruction*, 3(2). <https://doi.org/10.25134/ijli.v3i2.3677>
- Forrester, A. (2020) Addressing the challenges of group speaking assessments in the time of the Coronavirus. *International Journal of TESOL Studies*, 2 (2) 74-88 <https://doi.org/10.46451/ijts.2020.09.07>
- Hernández, S. S. F., & Flórez, A. N. S. (2020). Online teaching during Covid-19: How to maintain students motivated in an EFL Class. *Linguistics and Literature Review*, 6(2), 157-171. <https://doi.org/10.32350/lr.v6i2.963>
- Hodges, C., Moore, S., Lockee, B., Trust, T., & Bond, A. (2020). The difference between emergency remote teaching and online learning. *Educause Review*, 27(March 27).

- <https://er.educause.edu/articles/2020/3/the-difference-between-emergency-remote-teaching-and-online-learning>
- Ja'ashan, M. M. N. H. (2020). The challenges and prospects of using e-learning among EFL students in Bisha University. *Arab World English Journal*, 11(1), 124–137. <http://doi.org/10.24093/awej/vol11no1.11>
- Karalis, T., & Raikou, N. (2020). Teaching at the times of Covid-19: Inferences and implications for higher education pedagogy. *International Journal of Academic Research in Business and Social Sciences*, 10(5), 479–493. <http://doi.org/10.6007/IJARBS/v10-i5/7219>
- Lansangan, R. V. (2020). Teaching junior high school chemistry during the Covid-19 community quarantine season: lessons, challenges, and opportunities. *KIMIKA*, 31(1), 20–37. <http://doi.org/10.26534/kimika.v31i1.20-37>
- Lassoued, Z., Alhendawi, M., & Bashitialshaaer, R. (2020). An exploratory study of the obstacles for achieving quality in distance learning during the COVID-19 pandemic. *Education Sciences*, 10(9), 1-13 <https://doi.org/10.3390/educsci10090232>
- Loo, D. B. (2020) Integrating critical thinking in online language tasks: Considerations for an academic writing class. *International Journal of TESOL Studies*, 2 (2) 52-61. <https://doi.org/10.46451/ijts.2020.09.05>
- Mardiana, H. (2020). Lecturers' attitudes towards online teaching in the learning process. *Register Journal*, 13(1), 77–98. <http://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.18326/rgt.v13i1.77-98>
- Nae, N. (2020). Conventional education vs. remote education—"Just put it online?" A report from Japan. In *13th International Conference Innovation in Language Learning Virtual Edition* (p. 204).
- Nartiningrum, N., & Nugroho, A. (2020). Online learning amidst global pandemic: EFL students' challenges, suggestions, and needed materials. *English Franca: Academic Journal of English Language and Education*, 4(2), 115-140. <https://doi.org/10.29240/ef.v4i2.1494>
- Ng, C. H. (2020) Communicative language teaching (CLT) through synchronous online teaching in English language preservice teacher education. *International Journal of TESOL Studies*, 2 (2) 62-73. <https://doi.org/10.46451/ijts.2020.09.06>
- Onyema, E. M., Eucheria, N. C., Obafemi, F. A., Sen, S., Atonye, F. G., Sharma, A., & Alsayed, A. O. (2020). Impact of Coronavirus pandemic on education. *Journal of Education and Practice*, 11(13), 108--121. <http://doi.org/10.13140/RG.2.2.27946.98245>
- Rahiem, M. D. (2020). The emergency remote learning experience of university students in Indonesia amidst the Covid-19 crisis. *International Journal of Learning, Teaching and Educational Research*, 19(6) 1-26 <http://doi.org/10.26803/ijlter.19.6.1>
- Stenman, S., & Pettersson, F. (2020). Remote teaching for equal and inclusive education in rural areas? An analysis of teachers' perspectives on remote teaching. *International Journal of Information and Learning Technology*. <http://doi.org/10.1108/IJILT-10-2019-0096>
- Talidong, K. J. (2020). Implementation of emergency remote teaching (ERT) among Philippine teachers in Xi'an, China. *Asian Journal of Distance Education*, 15(1), 196-201. <http://www.asianjde.org/ojs/index.php/AsianJDE/article/view/463>

UNESCO Institute for statistics data. (2020). Covid-19 impact on education. UNESCO.
<https://en.unesco.org/covid19/educationresponse>

Yi, Y., & Jang, J. (2020). Envisioning possibilities amid the COVID - 19 pandemic:
 Implications from English language teaching in South Korea. *TESOL Journal*, 11(3). <https://doi.org/10.1002/tesj.543>

Appendix

Participants' code, country, and teaching experience

Code	Where they teach	Teaching experience	Institution	Degree	learners' proficiency levels
Part 1	Iraq	10 years	College of Education for Human Sciences	Ph.D. Assistant professor in linguistics/stylistics	Undergraduate students with Intermediate English proficiency
Part 2	Kingdom of Saudi Arabia	8 years	College of Arts, University of Bisha,	Ph.D. in Applied Linguistics	Undergraduate students with Intermediate English proficiency
Part 3	Yemen	11 years	University of Science and Technology-	Ph.D. in Translation studies.	Undergraduate students with Intermediate English proficiency
Part 4	Tunisia	35 years	Universities of Kairouan	Ph.D. Full Professor in Applied Linguistics	Undergraduate students with Intermediate English proficiency
Part 5	Libya	3 years	University of Tripoli Department of Translation Faculty of Languages	Ph.D. Assistant professor in Translation studies	Undergraduate students with Intermediate English proficiency
Part 6	Kingdom of Saudi Arabia	15 years	Aramco the Open University	Ph.D. Assistant professor in Linguistics	Undergraduate students with Intermediate English proficiency

Part 7	Kingdom of Saudi Arabia	7 years	Al-Yamamah University	Ph.D. Assistant professor in Psycholinguistics	Undergraduate students with Intermediate English proficiency
Part 8	Yemen	6 years	Department of English, Faculty of Education, Thamar University	Ph.D. Assistant professor in Applied linguistics	Undergraduate students with Intermediate English proficiency
Part 9	Oman	9 years	Salalah College of Technology	Ph.D. Associate Professor	Undergraduate students with Intermediate English proficiency
Part 10	Kingdom of Saudi Arabia	20 years	University of Bisha	Ph.D. Assistant Professor of Applied Linguistics	Undergraduate students with Intermediate English proficiency
Part 12	Yemen	13 years	Hadhramout University	Ph.D. Assistant professor in Literature	Undergraduate students with Intermediate English proficiency
Part 13	Iraq	11 years	University of Diyala	Ph.D. Assistant professor in English Language Teaching	Undergraduate students with Intermediate English proficiency
Part 14	Kingdom of Saudi Arabia	5 years	Najran University.	Ph.D. Associate Professor in Applied Linguistics	Undergraduate students with Intermediate English proficiency
Part 15	Jordan	4 years	Isra University	Ph.D. Assistant professor in curriculum and ELT	Undergraduate students with Intermediate English proficiency
Part 17	Kingdom of Saudi Arabia	18 years	Qassim University	Ph.D. Associate Professor of Applied Linguistics	Undergraduate students with Intermediate English proficiency

Part 18	Yemen	15 years	at University of Abyan	Ph.D. Assistant professor in Applied Linguistics	Undergraduate students with Intermediate English proficiency
Part 19	Yemen	20 years	Faculty of language and translation, Aden University.	Ph.D. Assistant professor in Applied Linguistics	Undergraduate students with Intermediate English proficiency
Part 20	Jordan	25 years	Ministry of Education	Ph.D. education supervisor in curriculum and ELT	Undergraduate students with advanced English proficiency
Part 21	Libya	38 years	University of Sabratha	Ph.D. Assistant professor in Applied linguistics	Undergraduate students with Intermediate English proficiency