

**People's Democratic Republic of Algeria  
Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research  
University of Tlemcen**



**Faculty of Letters and Languages  
Department of English**

**Online Communication Challenges: Case of First year  
EFL students and their teachers at the university of Tlemcen**

Dissertation submitted to the department of English as a partial fulfilment of the requirements for Master's degree in Didactics of Foreign Languages

**Presented by**

Ms. Fatima DAHAOUI.

**Supervised by**

Prof. Hafida HAMZAOU ELACHACHI.

**Board of Examiners**

Prof. Radia BENYELLES BENMANSOUR Professor President

Prof. Hafida HAMZAOU ELACHACHI. Professor Supervisor

Dr. Chemssedine LAMRI. Doctor Examiner

**2021 - 2022**

# **Dedication**

**To the soul of my father to whom I send my deepest priers, and whom I hope I made proud of me.**

**To my mother, The source of confidence, sacrifice and unconditional love.**

**To the apple of my eye, my little brother Ouassini.**

**To my fiance Abdessamad.**

**To my family who supported me in the long journey of my education.**

**May God bless all of you.**

# **Acknowledgments**

**Special thanks go to my dear supervisor, Prof.Hafida HAMZAOUI, for all the support and help she provided me with. I thank her for being so patient to answer my questions, correct my mistakes, and read my drafts over and over.**

**I would like to express my appreciation to the jury members, prof. Radia BENYELLES andDr.ChemseddineLAMRI For their valuable remarks and adviceon my work.**

**Finally, I would like to thank all the students and teachers who participated in this investigation Without whom this work would not have been completed.**

## **Abstract**

The online education system in Algeria was not generalised until 2020 when it proved its effectiveness during the pandemic situation of Covid-19. However, along with the benefits of that system came the challenges. The platforms used in E-learning, especially “Microsoft Teams Office”, have restricted learning. Students increasingly felt isolated and lost motivation. Moreover, many students and teachers argued that the new means of communication lacked effectiveness. The purpose of this inquiry then, is to explore what challenges and difficulties in communication do Algerian EFL teachers and students face once in an online meeting. It also aims at seeking real and feasible solutions to those challenges. To reach this end, an exploratory case study research was conducted in Abou Bakr Belkaid University by taking first year EFL students and their teachers as a sample. Data were collected thanks to two questionnaires administrated to 70 students and 10 teachers at the English department, then analysed qualitatively and quantitatively using Excel and SPSS. The results showed that EFL students and their teachers faced some challenges while communicating in an online meeting. Those challenges were of different categories: technical, physical, temporal, psychological, social and cultural. This work also suggested several solutions to solve the problem such as improving the technical side by providing fast internet and technological devices, promoting teacher student relationship, organising the session delivery and schedule, and finally including online teaching and learning as part of teacher training and student preparation. To conclude, though E-learning and online communication proved to be of great importance, they cannot replace face-to-face learning, they can only be a good support to the latter.

## List of Acronyms and abbreviations

---

### List of Acronyms and abbreviations:

- **COE:** Comprehension and Oral Expression.
- **CMC:** Computer Mediated Communication
- **CWE:** Comprehension and Written Expression.
- **ECU:** East Carolina University.
- **EFL:** English as a Foreign Language.
- **ER:** Exploratory Research.
- **E-learning:** Electronic Learning.
- **GPA:** Grade Point Average.
- **GPS:** Global Positioning System.
- **GVC:** Global Virtual Classroom.
- **ICT:** Information and Communication Technology.
- **NHSC:** The National Home Study Council.
- **NPPS:** The New Penny Postal System.
- **QR:** Quick Response.
- **SRS:** Simple Random Sampling.
- **USA:** The United States of America.
- **WHO:** World Health Organisation.

## List of Figures

---

### List of Figures

<b>Figure 1.1</b> Certificate of the accomplishment of the GVC program.....	19
<b>Figure 2.1</b> Students' age.....	27
<b>Figure 2.2</b> Students' participation frequency.....	28
<b>Figure 2.3</b> Technical barriers to online meetings.....	29
<b>Figure 2.4</b> Students' arguments about time insufficiency.....	30
<b>Figure 2.5</b> What makes online communication challenging.....	31
<b>Figure 2.6</b> Students' psychological status in online communication.....	32
<b>Figure 2.7</b> Solutions to facilitate online meetings.....	33
<b>Figure 2.8</b> Solutions to make online communication less challenging.....	35
<b>Figure 2.9</b> Students' handling of negative feelings.....	36
<b>Figure 2.10</b> Students' dealing with misunderstandings.....	37
<b>Figure 2.11</b> Teachers' experiences.....	38
<b>Figure 2.12</b> Online sessions' frequency of delivery.....	39
<b>Figure 2.13</b> Online Teaching experience ratings.....	40
<b>Figure 2.14</b> Technical difficulties of online meetings.....	41
<b>Figure 2.15</b> What makes online communication challenging.....	42
<b>Figure 2.16</b> Feelings associated with online communicating and teaching.....	43
<b>Figure 2.17</b> Solutions to technical issues.....	44
<b>Figure 2.18</b> What makes online teaching less challenging.....	46

## List of Figures

---

<b>Figure 2.19</b> How teachers handle students with negative feelings.....	47
<b>Figure 2.20</b> Teachers' attempts to create a sense of community among students.....	48

## List of tables

---

### List of tables

<b>Table 1.1</b> Four stages in the history of distance education.....	08
--	----



**Table of content**

<b>Dedication.....</b>	<b>II</b>
<b>Acknowledgments.....</b>	<b>III</b>
<b>Abstract.....</b>	<b>IV</b>
<b>List of Acronyms and Abbreviations.....</b>	<b>V</b>
<b>List of figures.....</b>	<b>VI</b>
<b>List of tables.....</b>	<b>VIII</b>
<b>Table of content.....</b>	<b>IX</b>
<b>General introduction.....</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Chapter One Communication and Online education</b>	
<b>1.1 Introduction.....</b>	<b>06</b>
<b>1.2 Distance Education.....</b>	<b>06</b>
<b>1.2.1 Definition.....</b>	<b>06</b>
<b>1.2.2 History of Distance education.....</b>	<b>07</b>
<b>1.2.3 Types of Distance Education.....</b>	<b>09</b>
<b>1.3 Impediments to distance education.....</b>	<b>09</b>
<b>1.3.1 Faculty perceived impediments</b>	
<b>1.3.2 Students' perceived impediments</b>	
<b>1.4 Communication and Online education.....</b>	<b>13</b>
<b>1.4.1 Features of Computer Mediated Communication.....</b>	<b>13</b>
<b>1.4.2 Types of Computer mediated communication.....</b>	<b>14</b>
<b>1.4.2.1 Asynchronous Computer mediated communication.....</b>	<b>14</b>

## Table of content

---

1.4.2.2 Synchronous Computer Mediated Communication.....	15
1.4.3 Impact of communication barriers on online education.....	15
1.5 Online Education in Algeria.....	16
1.5.1 Before the COVID 19 sanitary crisis.....	16
1.5.2 During the COVID 19 sanitary crisis .....	17
1.5.2.1 The sanitary crisis worldwide.....	17
1.5.2.2 Online education as an Alternative.....	17
1.5.3 Nowadays.....	18
1.6. Online education in the English department at the university of Tlemcen.....	18
1.6.1 Before the sanitary crisis.....	18
1.6.2 During the sanitary crisis.....	19
1.6.3 Nowadays.....	20
1.7 Conclusion.....	21

## Chapter Two Data analysis and recommendations.

2.1 Introduction.....	23
2.2 Research Design.....	24
2.3 Sample Population.....	24
2.3.1 Students' profile.....	24
2.3.2 Teachers' profile.....	24
2.4 Instrumentation.....	25
2.4.1 Students' questionnaire.....	25

## **Table of content**

---

2.4.2 Teachers' questionnaire.....	26
2.5 Data Analysis.....	26
2.5.1 Students' questionnaire analysis.....	26
2.5.2 Teachers' questionnaire analysis.....	37
2.6 Discussion of the main results.....	48
2.7 Suggestions and recommendations.....	51
2.7.1 Solutions to technical issues.....	51
2.7.2 Lectures' delivery and presentation.....	51
2.7.3 Teacher-student collaboration.....	51
2.8 Conclusion.....	52
General Conclusion.....	55
Bibliography.....	
Appendices.....	
Appendix A Questionnaire for students.....	
Appendix B Questionnaire for teachers.....	

**General**

**Introduction**

The year 2019 was so exceptional that it changed the world forever. Life on earth was suspended for months, and people were losing hope. It was due to the Covid-19 that has invaded the globe and killed a huge number of people. Due to this horrifying fact, the Algerian government has imposed several restrictions on all the sectors. The sector of higher education was no exception. There was a shift from the traditional face to face education to a remote online one. Technology proved its usefulness during this period when the educational staff and students started online teaching and learning, and were able to carry on the process of gaining knowledge and saving the academic year. online education was occurring in E-learning platforms and applications such as Zoom and Microsoft Teams.

One of the major requirements for an effective education to take place is successful communication. It allows the exchange of ideas, feelings and concerns besides information between students and teachers. Thus, if missing, the two parties would lose the solid background by which psychological and social status is stabilized. When education was moved online in 2020, communication still took place, but there were several issues and challenges that stood in the path of effective interaction.

Remoteness of education was not the only factor responsible for that, some difficulties were faced when using the video conferencing platforms such as microsoftteams.

Therefore, it is important to identify these difficulties and find out a solution to solve them. This study is, thus, significant because exploring these issues will enhance and increase the quality of online education, thus promoting the readiness of EFL teachers and student to engage in online courses and adopt the new innovations.

This investigation is thus aimed at highlighting the problems encountered while communicating online. It attempts to spotlight the weaknesses in the E-learning system and the means used i.e. the video conferencing platforms. It aims not only at depicting problems, but also at seeking solutions to solve them. The recommendations suggested may greatly contribute to make E-learning and online communication more effective.

This research will try to answer the two following questions:

- 1) What are the challenges encountered by both EFL students and their instructors when communicating online?
- 2) How to overcome these challenges and solve communication problems?

These questions led to the formulation of the following hypotheses:

- 1) During online classes, EFL teachers and their students face some difficulties of different categories: physical, technical, psychological, and social
- 2) Some solutions may be helpful to improve online communication between EFL teachers and students such as: receiving training in online teaching and learning, sticking to a learner-centred approach, and adopting several teaching techniques and learning styles.

To carry out this study, an exploratory case study will be used. A sample population of 70 first year EFL students at the university of Abou Bakr Belkaid (Tlemcen) and 10 teachers of the same level will be concerned. Two questionnaires will be delivered: one to teachers and the other to students. The data will be analysed qualitatively and quantitatively. The former method will be concerned with investigating the relationship between communication barriers, academic achievement and students'/teachers' readiness, whereas the latter method will be mainly concerned with statistical descriptions of the barriers. The data supplied will be analysed using the SPSS software.

The work is divided into two chapters. The first one is entitled "Communication and Online Education". It is mainly concerned with the literature review of distance education: its definition, historical origins, evolution, types and elements, together with the impediments and obstacles of distance education. The chapter after that moves to deal with communication within online education: its definition, features, types and barriers. Then ends up with discussing the state of online education in the Algerian universities in general and at the university of Tlemcen in particular.

## **General Introduction**

---

The second chapter is entitled “Data analysis and recommendations”. It is the practical side of the inquiry which includes the research plan and type. As its name suggests, this chapter is concerned with the collection of data about the issue tackled, i.e. online communication barriers within online education. Based on the analysis of data, interesting conclusions are deduced by the end of the section. Finally, suggestions and recommendations about improving online education in general and communication particularly are made.

**Chapter one Communication and Online education**

**1.1 Introduction**

**1.2 Distance Education**

**1.2.1 Definition**

**1.2.2 History of Distance education**

**1.2.3 Types of Distance Education**

**1.3 Impediments to distance education**

**1.3.1 Faculty perceived impediments**

**1.3.2 Students' perceived impediments**

**1.4 communication and Online education**

**1.4.1 Features of Computer Mediated Communication**

**1.4.2 Types of Computer mediated communication**

**1.4.2.1 Asynchronous Computer mediated communication**

**1.4.2.2 Synchronous Computer Mediated Communication**

**1.4.3 The Impact of communication barriers on online education**

**1.5 Online Education in Algeria**

**1.5.1 Before the COVID 19 sanitary crisis**

**1.5.2 During the COVID 19 sanitary crisis**

**1.5.2.1 The sanitary crisis worldwide**

**1.5.2.2 Online education as an Alternative**

**1.5.3 Nowadays**

**1.6 Online education in the English department at the university of Tlemcen**

**1.6.1 Before the sanitary crisis**



**1.6.2 During the sanitary crisis**

**1.6.3 Nowadays**

**1.7 Conclusion**

### 1.1 Introduction

When Covid19 hit the world in 2019, The value of online education significantly raised for being considered an alternative to traditional classrooms. The change also included forms of communication, Students and teachers could no more interact face-to-face, instead, communication was moved online . Along with the newly adopted type of communication, came new problems. The communication occurring online seemed to be losing its effectiveness, and it was criticized for that.

This chapter is concerned with the review of the literature existing about online education history, types, and status in Algeria. It is merely aimed at defining online communication, identifying its types, features, and of course, determining the difficulties encountered by online instructors and students while communicating online.

### 1.2 Distance education

Distance education is an operation of teaching/learning in a situation where face to face meetings are not possible. It is mostly done through a technical medium, be it printed, digital, video, or audio.

#### 1.2.1 Definition

Distance education was defined from different perspectives. Perraton (1988) defines distance education as “an educational process in which a significant proportion of the teaching is conducted by someone removed in space and/ or from the learners”.

Delling (1966),in his turn, broadly defines distance education as an organized operation that takes into account decisions about pedagogic selection and development of teaching aids, together with guidance and support of learners. It is attained through overcoming the physical distance between tutors and tutees through different ways and the minimum of technical mediums. Rumble (1989) notes that any distance educational operation must include a tutor, one or more tutees, a syllabus, either an explicit or implicit contract among learners and the institution employing the teacher.

Moreover, distance education includes various components or elements. Many scholars have attempted to identify them such as Keegan(1995) who identifies five essential elements that make distance education:

- The quasi permanent separation of the teacher and his students throughout the educational process.
- The impact of an institution in both the planning the course, and, offering support to students.
- The use of technical means as a medium to bridge the physical distance between teachers and learners.
- The provision of two-way communication services to enable students' engagement and motivation.
- The quasi permanent absence of learning groups in which learners are thought individually.

Distance education did not appeared out of the blue, It rather passed through different phases before becoming what it is nowadays.

### **1.2.2 History of distance education**

Distance education has now existed for more than a century. The very first form of distance education was correspondence education which was developed in Europe in the mid 19thC when the British Isaac Pitman started teaching via correspondence in 1840, he used the New Penny Post System (NPPS) as a medium of connection with his students. It had soon spread overseas to America, When the university of “Illinois Wesleyan” used distance education with bachelor and graduate students in 1874. In 1926, The National Home Study Council (NHSC) was founded to treat issues related to excellence and fair practice.

Distance education went through a major change when the radio and television were invented in the following years. This time, teachers depended on radio and television broadcasting as an educational medium to transmit the message.

## Chapter one: Communication and Online education

---

Later on after the arrival of computers, distance education took a big leap. Students and teachers were then able to use conferencing techniques, such as one-way video recordings, and two-way telephone. These technologies have improved communication between students and teachers thanks to multimedia systems.

Distance education is nowadays globally widespread, studies have indicated that almost 6.36 million American students are home schooled. The table below describes the four stages that distance education passed through before eventually becoming online:

**Table 1.1 Four stages in the history of distance education.**

<b><u>Stage</u></b>	<b><u>Description</u></b>	<b><u>Date</u></b>	<b><u>Pioneer</u></b>
<b>Correspondence education</b>	Based on printed technology	1840AD	Isaac Pitman
<b>Educational broadcasting</b>	The use of broadcasting devices namely the radio and the television	1922AD	Pennsylvania State College
<b>Multimedia approaches</b>	The use of telecommunication technologies namely one-way video conferences and two-way audio calls	1989AD	The University of Phoenix
<b>E-educational approaches</b>	The introduction of internet	21 <sup>st</sup> C	US universities

- Adopted from Reinventing Distance education (**Rumble, 2010, p, 31\_43**)

### 1.2.3 Types of distance education

Over years, several names have been given to distance education, namely:

Correspondence education, Independent study, and recently, Online education. These labels may be used interchangeably, but never synonymously.

#### ➤ **Correspondence education:**

It differs from distance education in the sense that it is a formal process in which the institution sends learning materials and examinations via postal services, e-mail, and other technical means.

#### ➤ **Independent study:**

Also called “Directed Study”. It refers to a form of educational activities undertaken by a student – generally a research topic- with little guidance or supervision.

#### ➤ **Online education:**

It is the most recent addition to the educational system, also known as “E-learning” that stands for Electronic learning. It is defined as an electronically delivered instruction through internet platforms and applications. According to Koohang and Harman (2005), “E-learning is the delivery of education through various electronic media”.

### 1.3 Impediments to distance education

In online education, learning barriers refer to any obstacle that stands in the way of students preventing them from academic progress. Online learning barriers have been frequently identified and studied by many scholars, namely: Muilenburg and Berger (2005); Joshi et al (2020); Kara (2020); Lloyd (2012); Maguire (2005); and Fisher (2020). Each one of these authors has provided barriers categorization from different perspectives by taking into account several factors such as age, gender, and, rank.

#### 1.3.1 Faculty perceived barriers

Teaching online unveils many challenges for the faculty members. Moreover,” the gap between administrators' and faculty members' attitudes towards online education

has widened over the last ten years” (Glass,2017 Cited in Lloyd et al., 2012 p7). It includes “Intrinsic and extrinsic barriers as well as institutional inhibitors to online teaching” (Maguire, 2005).

Muilenburge and Berger (2005) have identified four types of faculty perceived barriers:

➤ **Institutional barriers**

It is noticed that most perceived impediments by staff members are institutional, such as; the lack of release time, the allocation of faculty workload, the matter of priorities and institutional policies, not rewarding efforts, the lack of copy rights and intellectual property respect, and, the absence of suitable compensation systems. (Fisher, 2020 p37).

➤ **Interpersonal barriers**

It refers to the sum of negative emotions that faculty members experience in online environments. These emotions serve as a factor that prevents interpersonal communication between faculty members. Which influences their choices and preferences of the teaching types ; whether to teach with or without technology.

Relations between staff members serve in increasing collegiality and professional development. However, feelings of satisfaction and familiarity tend to expire whenever the teaching is set online. They are rather replaced by feelings of fear and concerns about the quality of the teaching occurring online, Isolation and remoteness feelings with the inability to grasp visual cues.( Fisher, 2020).

➤ **Faculty development & training/technology barriers**

Training and technology barriers are one of the main impediments encountered by teachers and faculty members in online education. It includes matters of; lack of the equipment ,the lack of competent online teachers, the low technical expertise and infrastructure, the resistance to undertake training courses and to implement the innovation.

(Swan, 2017 cited in Fisher, 2020) notes that although several attempts are been made to settle reasonable choices to online education. Yet, faculties are still improperly equipped, as members are still getting familiar with online platforms. Moreover, a

study conducted by Allen & Seaman,2010 proved that nearly 19% of all educational institutions do not provide any training programs at all.

### ➤ **Cost/benefit analysis barrier**

Almost every research completed in the field of online education addressed time commitments as a barrier, regardless of the objectives. This type includes: expanding tasks and duties, unreasonable commitment schedules, insufficient remuneration, insufficient time to correct papers and grade students. Finally, the amount of costs incurred while preparing and delivering online lectures also serves as a barrier.( Fisher, 2020:41).

To sum up, studies have indicated the existence of several impediments perceived by faculty members. Those barriers are many and diverse, they fall into four broad categories; institutional, interpersonal, training/technology and, cost/benefit barriers). It is worth saying that those categories interact with each other and are affected by factors such as age, gender and, rank. A study conducted by Lloyd,2012 showed that members aged between 45\_60 years old have scored higher rates of institutional, training, and cost/benefit barriers than younger members. On another dimension, men have documented lower rates of technological/technical barriers than women. The latter however were found to be the least ones dealing with the rest of barriers categories.

### **1.3.2 Students' perceived barriers**

Several studies have been conducted to highlight students' perceived obstacles in online education. The findings were many and diverse, yet, it can be categorised as follows:

#### ➤ **Technical barriers:**

There are three subcategories that fall under this one, namely:

- **Technical problems:** most of universities are inappropriately equipped with hardware/software. It lacks technical support and consistent platforms.
- **Lack of technical skills:** Most of the students have low technical expertise, and are afraid to use technological tools that are not familiar to them.



- Cost and access to the internet: It serves as a barrier since telecommunication systems are still developing in some rural areas. Moreover, internet access is not possible for some students coming from poor families since it is not free. In fact, not all students have their personal mobile phones, some of them are still visiting cybershops.

All the problems mentioned above serve in increasing the likelihood of technical problems in online education.

➤ **Social barriers:**

In online settings, There is a limited social interaction, lack of students-student collaboration, lack of communication, and, negative feelings associated with distance education. These were the findings of studies conducted by Muilenburge and Berge,2005/ Joshi et Al,2020/ and Kebritchi et Al,2017.

➤ **Administrative and institutional barriers**

Teachers' lack of training, the overcrowded online classes, the absence of online tutorial programs for new students, and the absence of visual cues and instant feedback all map on the administrative and institutional barriers category. (Muilenburge and Berge,2005/ and Kebritchi et Al,2017/ Appana,2008/ and, kara,2020).

➤ **Time commitment and schedule barriers**

The insufficiency of time, or increased work and study loads makes it challenging for students to balance between personal and educational commitments. Adding to that the lack of familial support, it is difficult for students to study online without interruptions. (Muilenburge and Berge,2005/ Kebritchi et Al,2017/ Joshi et Al, 2020 and, kara,2020).

➤ **Psychological barriers**

Muilenburge and Berge (2005) noticed when they surveyed a large number of 1056 students whom they were attending online classes that they shared low rates of both intrinsic and instrumental motivation, which is a result of constantly increasing responsibilities. Other negative feelings such as frustration, isolation and anxiety were highly noticed by the researchers.

### ➤ **Academic skills neglecting barriers**

In online settings, the students' receptive skills (listening and reading) are highly emphasized on, while his productive skills (speaking and writing) are somehow neglected. Although most of online courses claim that their teaching is learner-centred, yet, this is hardly true since the act of speaking is mostly done by the instructor.

## **1.4 Communication in online education**

It refers to communication, in its verbal and nonverbal forms. It occurs through several forms of media, be it wired or wireless. Online communication is also known as Computer Mediated Communication (CMC). According to (December,2019 Cited in Romiszowski and Mason,2013 p398), CMC refers to “the process by which people create, exchange, and perceive information using networked telecommunication systems to facilitate encoding, transmitting, and decoding messages”. CMC is more than just hardware and software. It rather facilitates sophisticated social interactions (Romiszowski and Mason,2013).

CMC is not just a tool; It is at once technology, medium, and engine of social relations. It not only structures social relations, it is the space within which relations occur, and the tool that individuals use to enter that space. (Jones(1995)cited in Romiszowki and Mason 2013p 398). There exists many examples and applications of computer mediated communication such as emails, instant messaging, text messaging, hypertext, bulletin boards, videoconferencing, online shopping ...etc. The main application of CMC is in the field of education for it have proved its usefulness during the few passed years.

### **1.4.1 Features of computer mediated communication**

According to Romiszowski and Mason 2013, online communication has many characteristics and features that distinguishes it from normal communication.

#### ➤ **Highly interactive**

CMC is a combination of both the everlasting characteristic of written communication, with pace and speed of spoken communication. The chances of interaction and instant responses are unlimited, while constraints are very low.

### ➤ **Flexible in nature**

A major feature of CMC is the amount of flexibility it offers for both students and their teachers. It permits them to communicate at anytime and anywhere using internet and a variety of means.

### ➤ **Ease of connection**

Initiating a virtual meeting easily is one of the main benefits of computer mediated communication. It has made it easier for students and teachers to connect with each other regardless of time and location.

### ➤ **Cost effective**

During the pandemic situation of Covid-19, when leaving the house represented a serious threat to ones' life, CMC was there to facilitate reaching people. Needless to mention the large amount of money it costs to travel from one city/country to another, which is not necessary now since you can contact whoever you want with low cost. (Eztalks.com).

### • **Passive participation**

While all the previously mentioned features were positive, this one represents a negative characteristic to CMC. It is rather a critique since educational online communication is mostly characterized by the small proportion of active participants who make small limited contributions. It is therefore criticized of the lurking students who are there to just observe.

## **1.4.2 Types of online communication**

Before, communication used to be either verbal, or nonverbal. Now that it became online, communication is either synchronous, or asynchronous.

### **1.4.2.1 Asynchronous online communication**

It refers to delayed-time interaction, where there is a significant delay between sending a message and actually reading it. Asynchronous CMC is designed so as not to

be dependent on immediate responses. Examples of asynchronous online communication are; e-mail, text messages, and, video messages.

(Romiszowski and Mason, 2013 p399/ Study.com)

### **1.4.2.2 Synchronous online communication**

It refers to real-time interactions. It occurs when communication happens between two or more active parties. Similarly to face-to-face communication, synchronous CMC is not a one way type. It proved to be very reliable in educational contexts, where meetings between the lecturer and the lecturees take place in chat rooms, by using different types of software such as Microsoft Teams Office which is very often used in Algerian universities especially Tlemcen university. The latter as defined by (Martin.L, 2019), It refers to

a cloud app digital hub that brings channels, conversations, meetings, files, and apps to Microsoft 365. Teams are made up of channels, and channels are used to divide a teams into topics, or in this case (educational setting) undergraduate modules.

### **1.4.3 The impact of communication barriers on online education achievement**

According to the dictionary of education (2005), “The achievement is a successful accomplishment in certain subjects, areas, discipline or course, usually in case of skill, profession and hard work, and interest”. Students in normal situations study hard and make efforts to just achieve the Grade Point Average (GPA). However, when education is moved online, extra effort is needed to cope with the situation. Along with the technological development in the field of distance education come the obstacles that make the academic achievement more challenging. (Abou Bakar, Shah, and Qingyu 2020:253).

It is worth noting that online communication impediments, regardless of type, all lead to the students’ demotivation, feelings of remoteness, frustration, and concerns about the quality of the lectures dealt with. It consequently leads students to drop their courses in case it is not compulsory. A case in point, English students (at the university of Tlemcen) attend online meetings in order not to be excluded of the module, i.e. their motives are instrumental. This lack of interest in turn will lead to low academic

performance (grades) and competence (knowledge) of students by the end of the semester.

Going back to literature, Shah and Qingyu(2020) in their article entitled “The effect of communication barriers on distance learners achievement” have found that the six types of communication barriers all participate in one way or another in reducing the operation of learning achieving. They also found that some types of barriers are more powerful and have a larger effect than others. For instance, the cultural and psychological communication barriers have the least impact on the academic achievement of online learners. On the other hand, It was found that the technical, temporal, collaboration, and social impediments negatively impact the operation of online teaching-learning and have a detrimental effect on distance education to the extent that it can push students with low readiness and motivation rates to drop the course and abandon online education.

### **1.5 Online education in Algeria**

The history of online learning in Algeria traces back to 2003 when the ministry of higher education began to equip universities and institutions with tools and materials. “ While the phenomenon took off overseas in the early 1990s ..It was only in around 2006 that it began to take hold locally, and only now that we are starting to see it’s proliferation” (Benharzallah, 2020:2).

#### **1.5.1 Before the sanitary crisis**

By the beginnings of E-learning in Algeria,” which was around 2006 with the collaboration of both (Thomson& Microsoft Corporation)” (M. Benharzallah,2020). Electronic learning was all about teaching ICTs and lecturing about it. Later on in 2010, the scope of lectures was broadened to inform practitioners, technicians, and administrators on how to deal with the new electronic system. (Souar 2021:17).

Although the significance of E-learning in the field of higher education was recognised in terms of saving time, learning flexibility, and , accessibility of information. Yet, the lack of training and internet connection are major problems that decrease E-learning successfulness and effectiveness. (Saihi, 2020 Cited in

Benharzallah 2020.)In short, as (Souar,2021:17) states, “ Before the pandemic, E-learning was not replaced by traditional faceto face learning, but rather it had supplemented the teaching

learning process”, it was not until the pandemic situation that online education replaced traditional education and was no longer considered substantial.

### **1.5.2 During the sanitary crisis**

#### **1.5.2.1 Thesanitary crisis worldwide**

It is a crisis caused by Covid19, which is considered to be one of the deadliest diseases in history with statistics of 5.37 million deaths globally until now (Wikipedia,2022). It is caused by the virus (SARS-COV-2), which is the responsible for the pandemic. The first human case of Corona virus was identified in Wuhan China in December 2019. Later on in March 2020, The World Health Organisation (WHO) declared it a pandemic health emergency of international concern, an announcement that have changed the world forever (WIKIPEDIA,2022).

#### **1.5.2.2 Onlineeducation as an alternative**

When the country was hardly hit by Covid19 in 2020, several closures were imposed on different fields. Higher education was no exception; academic activities and international conferences, workshops, and, study visas were either postponed or cancelled. (F. Boulkroune,2020 cited in Souar, 2020:25).The academic year of thousands of Algerian students was unpredictably hung for an undetermined period and urgent solutions were required. Therefore, the ministry of higher education presented an alternative to face to face education i.e. Online education.

The use of remote internet based education via (social media, zoom, E-learning platform and Microsoft Teams) have presented the drastic change in online teaching/ learning significance, which continued even after the crisis has arrived to an end. It was the E-learning platforms that were mostly focused on and preferred by EFLteachers and administrators during the pandemic for the easiness of lectures design and delivery. However, a study by ( Kaddech et al, 2021) at the the university of Ouargla has indicated that this platform reduced student-teacher interaction and

increased demotivation rates. Besides, it was difficult for teachers who have never received any

training in using ICT to benefit from E-learning. Another inquiry conducted by (Ghounane, 2020 cited in A. Souar, 2020:24) indicated that some teachers showed resistance to the innovative system of online education.

All in all, online education has played a significant role in saving the academic year of 2020. The shift from traditional Chalk and talk technique to the use of technology have proved to be very beneficial.

### **1.5.3 Nowadays**

Before Corona virus hit the world, Algerian education was largely based on traditional face to face lecturing. Now that the risk is over and students are slowly returning to traditional classrooms, one should not deny the favour of E-learning. Indeed, university educators have deduced how crucial it is to integrate online education tools in the system, especially when the latter proved it's effectiveness when compared to on-site classes. (EDTICK, 2022).

In this respect, the ministry of higher education has strived to provide every single student and staff member with a free access to Microsoft Teams, by creating accounts in collaboration with Microsoft Office. Microsoft Teams is a proprietary business communication platform developed by Microsoft company. It offers workspace chats and video conferencing. During the pandemic situation of Covid-19, Teams gained much interest as many meetings moved to a virtual setting. It has about 250 million monthly users.(WIKIPEDIA, 2022).

Online education is no longer considered an alternative. It rather represents an important component of the educational system. It provides flexibility, accessibility, and, it shortens the distance between students and their teachers. Needless to mention that problems such as lack of interaction and passive students are somehow addressed now with the delivery of lectures on Teams..

## **1.6 Online education in the English department of Tlemcen university**

### **1.6.1 Beforecorona virus**

The very first form of online education took place around 2006 with the initiation of ICTs in the Algerian universities by the ministry of higher education in collaboration with both “Thomson” and “Microsoft” corporation (Benharzallah :2020). However



## Chapter one: Communication and Online education

real online learning haven't started until years later. The department of English at Tlemcen university started an educational project called “ The Global Virtual Classroom” (GVC) in collaboration with universities of foreign countries from Africa, Asia, Europe and America. GVC refers to a virtual learning community where two parties of students who are geographically distant meet and exchange knowledge, experience and help each other to learn English and foreign cultures in the light of globalization. By the end of the program, students enrolled achieve a certificate of accomplishment.

The beginning of the GVC program goes back to spring 2007\_2008 where students had the first link overseas with The East Carolina University from USA (ECU ANTH 299) . By that time communication merely depended on Skype which enables communication under slow internet flow.



- **Figure 1.1** Certificate of the accomplishment of the GVC project .

Retrieved from <https://faclettre.univ-tlemcen.dz/pages/137/gvc>.

E-learning platform was introduced for the first time to Tlemcen EFL students in February 2020 In response to the national political movement against the fourth custody known as “El Hirak”. When students associations refused to study and entered in continuous strikes, the administration launched the educational electronic platform as an alternative to face to face courses where it was possible to save the second semester of the academic year.

Before the pandemic, online education was globally considered a substitute that cannot be fully reliable. The department of English at the university of Tlemcen was no exception. (Adopted from <https://cte.univ-tlemcen.dz/en/pages/78/gvc>).

**1.6.2 During the sanitary crisis** When the World Health Organisation (WHO) declared the situation a pandemic health emergency of international concern in January 2020, all the country sectors were shut to closures. The ministry of higher education in turn imposed closures on all the universities and superior colleges. The department of English at Tlemcen university was no exception. It is true that students were banned from physical attendance, however, learning has not stopped. The department of English had an alternative to traditional classrooms i.e. E-learning platforms. It was time to stop thinking about online education as a substitute second choice and start appreciating it as the new approach to teach and learn in the light of present circumstances. Indeed, students were already acquainted with the platform, but this did not make the situation any less confusing for them. Some students still needed to here the voice of their teachers and maybe observe them. In short, the spirit of the traditional classroom was missing.

Around August 2020, online education in the department of English took another leap. The administration workers delivered forms to be filled with personal information about students in order to create a “Microsoft Teams Office” for each student. After that, students received validation emails and there was the new method of teaching. The era of online meetings, schedules, rooms, channels, assignments and many other features in the application have served in creating a virtual classroom.

During the sanitary crisis, it was online education that saved the academic year in the English department at the university of Tlemcen. Its scope was broadened, Its value was recognised, and it was sure that its position among other approaches has changed forever.

### **1.6.3 Nowadays**

One cannot claim that the sanitary crisis is over and Corona virus is no longer there. The department of English at the university of Tlemcen is still following protocols and

imposing the preventive measures on students such as social distancing and sterilisation.

In the light of such circumstances, EFL students are slowly going Back to traditional classrooms. However, online education has not been completely dispensed on. Instead, an interesting protocol is been followed by the sector of higher education, a protocol of which is applied in the English department i.e. the protocol of waves. It is a system that has been adopted since the academic year 2020\_2021 in which students are devised to categories according to their academic year, each one of those has one week of face to face studies once every month . After that students are obliged to attend online

classes as some teachers count the amount of attendances and give bonus marks accordingly. In fact, even some examinations and viva meetings are done online via Teams. In this way, online education nowadays represents half of the educational process. It is almost impossible for teachers to abandon it after recognizing its value and the important role it plays in facilitating the smooth sailing of the educational operation.

### **1.7 Conclusion**

Although distance education has existed in Algeria for decades now, It was only in 2006 that E-learning entered Algerian universities. It largely drew interest in 2020 when it suddenly became the only solution to both saving the academic year and surviving the pandemic situation of Covid-19. Along with E-learning came a more sophisticated form of communication, i.e. CMC. This form of communication however was not flawless, instead , It has created several types of barriers, impediments and challenges to both online instructors, faculty members and mostly, students.

This chapter set the theoretical background of the issues tackled by the researcher. It therefore highlighted the main concepts and terms that must be defined and clarified. It started by providing scholarly definitions for distance education together with its elements, types and history. Then, it moved to describing the state of online education in Algeria with its three phases, besides highlighting the main challenges perceived by

both faculty members and students. It after that shifted to define online communication, together with its features and types. The chapter tackled later on the

## **Chapter one: Communication and Online education**

---

matter of barriers with its effect on the academic performance and online education as a whole. Finally, the section closed by citing scholars' suggestions and recommendations to overcome the challenges and provide an effective online communication.

**Chapter Two Data Analysis and Recommendations.**

**2.1 Introduction.**

**2.2 Research Design.**

**2.3 Sample Population.**

**2.3.1 Students' profile.**

**2.3.2 Teachers' profile.**

**2.4 Instrumentation.**

**2.4.1 Students' questionnaire.**

**2.4.2 Teachers' questionnaire.**

**2.5 Data Analysis.**

**2.5.1 Students 'questionnaire analysis.**

**2.5.2 Teachers' questionnaire analysis.**

**2.6 Discussion of the main results.**

**2.7 Suggestions and recommendations.**

**2.7.1 Solutions to technical issues.**

**2.7.2 Lectures' delivery and presentation.**

**2.7.3 Teacher- student collaboration.**

**2.8 Conclusion.**

### **2.1 Introduction**

The ultimate objective of this research is to shed light on the difficulties usually encountered by EFL students and their teachers once in an online meeting, problems of which have serious effect on communication. In this part of the dissertation, the researcher will try to either confirm or disconfirm the mentioned research hypotheses. The researcher will follow the practical steps dictated by the principles of the Exploratory Case Study Research (ER). First, the chapter opens with a brief description of the research design/plan followed by the researcher which includes the type of the inquiry together with a justification of the choice. Second, it moves to the description of the sample population i.e. first year EFL students and their teachers. Then, the researcher moves to listing the different instruments that were applied in the gathering of first handed data. Those instruments are mainly an online questionnaire for students and another one for teachers. After that, the analysis of both questionnaires together with their interpretation will take place. Next, the discussion of the main results will lead to either confirming or disconfirming the research hypothesis. Consequently, useful recommendations and suggestions will be provided. Finally, the chapter ends with a brief conclusion.

### **2.2 Research design**

Saunders, et al. (2012) define Research Design as a “general plan to answer a research question. It brings together several components, strategies, and, methods to collect data and analyse it”. Taking this research is an exploratory case study, as defined by Kothari (2004), an exploratory research (ER) is “a formulative research and its main purpose is formulating a problem for more precise investigation. Its major emphasis is on the discovery of ideas and insight” (C.R Kothari, 2004 cited in A. Souar, 2021:35). Whereas a case study refers to a deep, intensive and systematic inquiry about a person, a group of people, or a community aimed at examining complex phenomena of natural and social sciences in order to generalize the findings. It is generally agreed by scholars that a case study is not a method, it rather represents a strategy of conducting a research. (Stoecher, 1991 & Yin, 1994 Cited in Rhee, Y, 2004: 72). Exploratory case study is the most suitable design for the present inquiry for it enables to investigate the problems of online communication that occur during online classes.

Moreover, it is beneficial for exploring possible techniques and solutions to the identified issues. Following the principles of (ER), the researcher will conduct a first-handed data collection and analysis. She uses quantitative instruments namely an online questionnaire for students and another one for their teachers. The case addressed in this research is 1<sup>st</sup>Year licence EFL students and their teachers

### **2.3 Sample population**

The participants were first year licence EFL Students at the University of Tlemcen. Simple random sampling (SRS) was used in this research . It was chosen for being the least time and effort consuming method of sampling besides being bias free. It is a type of probability sampling method where the researcher randomly selects participants in a way that everyone of the target population has an equal opportunity of been chosen (Lauren.T ,2020).Seventy students from the whole population of first year (nearly 400 students), i.e. approximately (1/4) of students answered the online form of the questionnaire that was published in their groups. In addition to that, 10 EFL teachers of first year students answered an other online questionnaire. This time a non-random sampling was opted for i.e., only teachers who delivered online meetings were targeted. Non-random sampling is a type of non-probability sampling method in which not all members of the target population have the chance of being selected, only those who meet the requirements will be. Unlike Simple random sampling, non -random sampling is somehow biased and subjective, but this type of sampling better served the purpose of this research.

#### **2.3.1 Students' profile**

Seventy first year EFL Students were targeted. Their age varied between 18 and 37 years old.1<sup>st</sup> year students were targeted for being the newest members of the department. They have not gained familiarity with terms like teams ( Microsoft Teams), online meetings, teams assignment, E-learning, etc. Henceforth, they represent the perfect choice to investigate What barriers and problems do exist in online learning in general, and communication in particular.

#### **2.3.2 Teachers' profile**



Besides first year EFL students, ten teachers of the same level answered another online questionnaire. These teachers teach different modules: Comprehension and Oral Expression (COE) (2 teacher), Study Skills (1 teacher), Comprehension and Written Expression (CWE) (2 teachers), literature (2 teachers), Grammar (1 teacher) and, civilisation (2 teachers). They share one common point: they all teach online and deliver lectures in Teams. This is why they have been chosen, for being acquainted with the common problems usually faced, and having experience with how to treat and overcome them. Another reason for targeting those teachers is their long teaching experience (between 9 and 28 years) in the department.

### **2.4 Instrumentation**

Reviewing the already existing literature in this field of online learning and communication is of great importance. However, relying merely on secondary sources is not efficient. Instead, first handed data must be collected by using a variety of instruments or tools. This ultimately happens through the process of data collection and analysis. Triangulation of tools is crucial to achieve the most accurate results. Questionnaires are useful tools that can be used in an inquiry to gather both quantitative and qualitative data. As defined by (Cohen et al. 2018, Cited in Benayad & Benaisa, 2019, p 23): “The questionnaire is widely used and useful instrument for collecting survey information, providing structured, often numerical data, able to administered without the presence of the researcher, and often comparatively straightforward to analyse”.

In this respect, two online questionnaires were administered to both 1<sup>st</sup> year EFL students and their teachers to cross check results. Each one is aimed at exploring the perceptions and attitudes towards online classes and communication challenges, together with investigating ways to solve the unsolved and render the newly applied type of education more effective.

#### **2.4.1 Students' questionnaire**

The students' questionnaire is devised into 3 main rubrics. Each rubric consists of questions that share the same purpose (see appendix ...).

- **Rubric one students' profile.**

Questions 1,2,3 and 4, they aim at investigating students' profile and attitudes towards learning and communicating online.

- **Rubric two investigating the barriers.**

Questions 5,6,7,8 and 9, they aim at exploring the issues and challenges encountered by EFL students in online communication.

- **Rubric three solutions.**

Questions 10,11,12,13,14 and 15, they aim at finding solutions to the depicted problems.

### **2.4.2 Teachers' questionnaire**

The teachers' questionnaire is also organised in the form of rubrics (see appendix ...) :

- **Rubric one teachers' profile.**

Questions 1 to 4 aim at investigating teachers' profiles and their attitudes towards teaching and communicating online.

- **Rubric two investigating the barriers.**

Questions 5 to 9 aim at exploring the challenges encountered by 1<sup>st</sup> year EFL instructors while delivering online lessons.

- **Rubric three solutions.**

Questions 10 to 14 aim at suggesting solutions and recommendations to the above depicted problems.

### **2.5 Data analysis**

After data was collected from both EFL students and their teachers, the process of data analysis and interpretation will take place.

#### **2.5.1 Students' questionnaire analysis**

The questionnaire designed for students consists of three rubrics. After the electronic forms were redelivered to 1<sup>st</sup> year students, 70 responses were analysed quantitatively and qualitatively as shown in the following sections:

- **Rubric one: Students' profile**

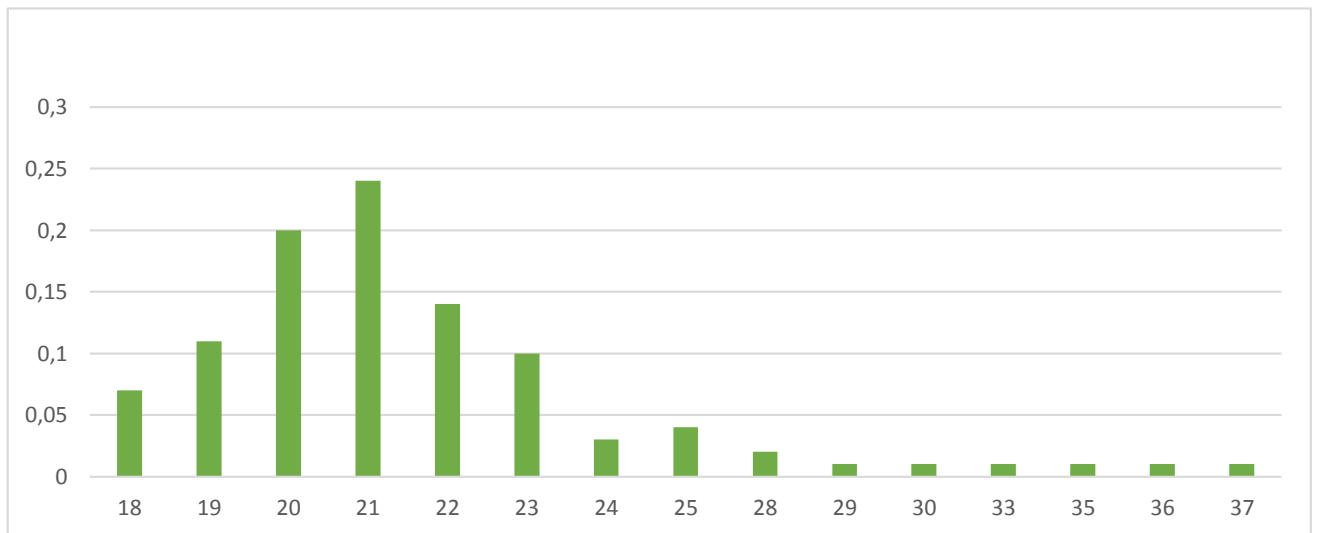
These questions are aimed at investigating student's profiles and their attitudes towards "online classes" and "communication". The four close ended questions were answered as follows:

**1) Question 01 students' gender**

71% of the respondents were females, while the rest were males. This question is aimed at testing students readiness and willingness to study, which varies depending on gender.

**2) Question 02 students age**

This question reveals that students' ages varies from 18 to 37 As shown in the following figure. This shows that most of 1<sup>st</sup> year students are mature enough to be responsible for their own learning and to judge the worth of a given program.



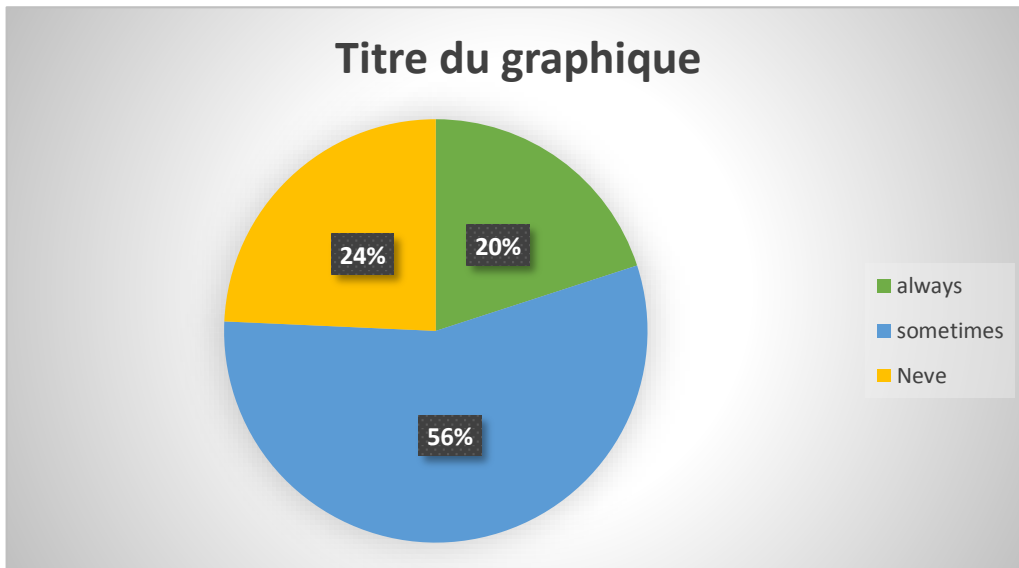
- **Figure 2.1: Student's age.**

**3) Question 03 Do you like joining online discussions on teams?**

This question is aimed at investigating students' attitude towards joining online meetings. In this respect, the largest slice portion of students (54%) said that they did not like joining online discussions on teams. This means that there is a problem with these sessions, the matter will be clarified through the upcoming questions.

**4) Question 04 how often do you participate in online discussions on teams?**

As shown in the pie below, the largest slice of students who join online classes (56%) said that they “ Sometimes” participate. While only (20%) of students “always” participate. Finally,24% of respondents “never” participate in discussions.



- **Figure 2.2:** Students' participation frequency.
- **Rubric two: Investigating the barriers**

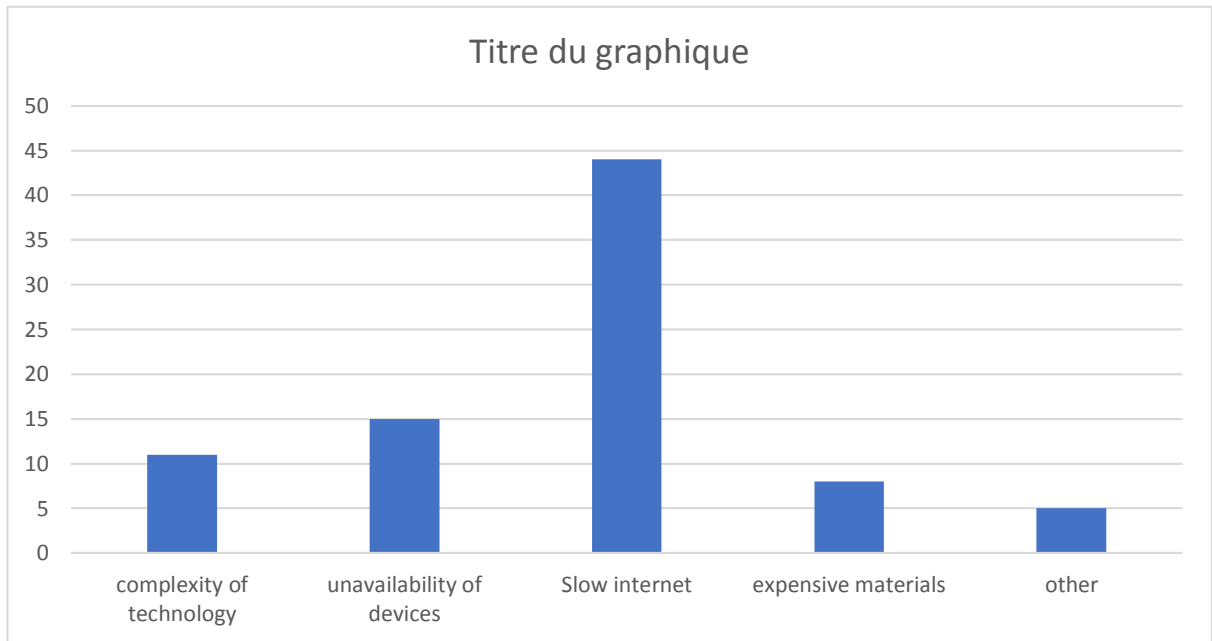
This part of the questionnaire is aimed at investigating the different challenges and problems encountered by students when attending an online class .Indeed the5 open and close ended questions detected different types of barriers as shown in the following section.

**5) Question 05 Is the task of joining an online meeting and communicating difficult?**

54% of students do find the operation of joining an online meeting, difficult. When been asked about the reasons, as shown in the chart below, Their answers revealed that ”technical issues” play an important role in persuading students to learn online. Those issues were mainly:

- Slow internet (53%)
- Unavailability of technological devices (18%)
- Expensive materials (10%)

- Complexity of technology(13%)
  - i. Other reasons were mentioned namely:Low professionalism of teachers
  - ii. The timing cannot suit everyone.
  - iii. It is useless

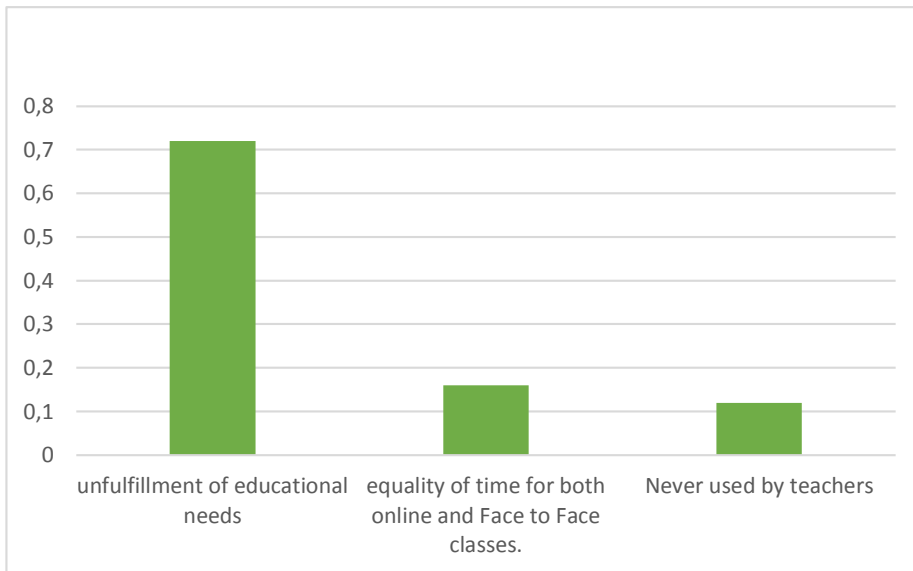


• **Figure 2.3:** Technical barriers to online meetings.

**6) Question 06 Is the amount of time dedicated to online classes per month sufficient?**

The majority of students (56%)believed that the amount of time dedicated to online classes per month was nonsufficient, and that more hours were needed to cover the complex items of the syllabus for the following reasons:

- The majority of respondents (72%) believed that online classes did not fulfil the educational needs. Thus, It should not be used at all, for the fact that face to face ones are more productive.
- 16% of respondents believe that online and facetofaceclasses should be equal in terms of time.
- 12% of respondents stated that actually, no online learning was taking place at all; teams sessions we're never used.



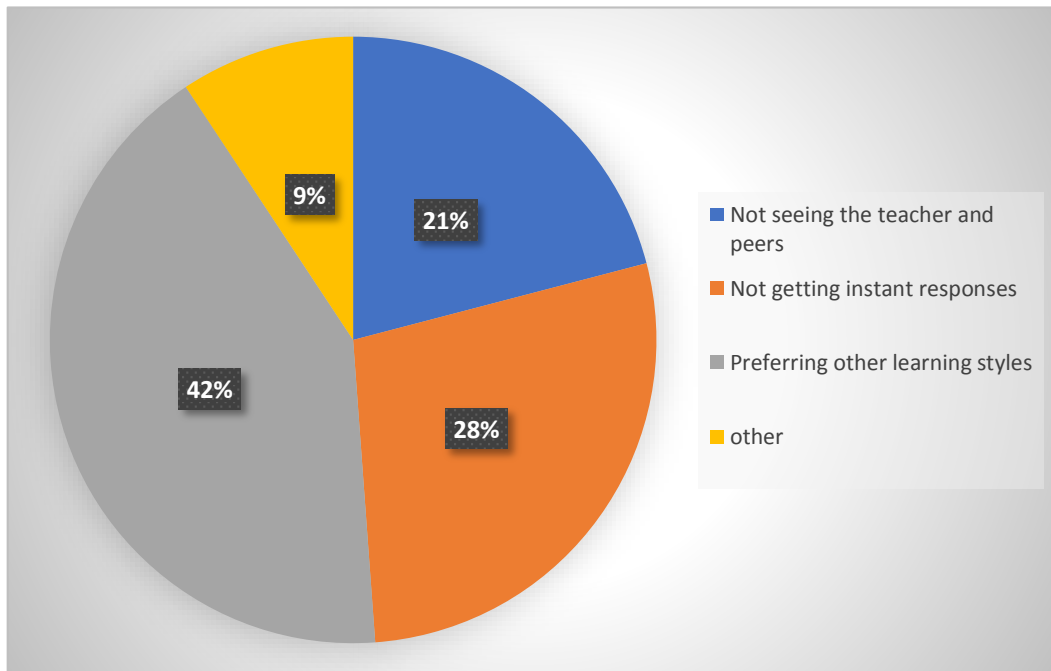
• **Figure 2.4:** Students' arguments about time insufficiency.

**7) Question 07 Do you find studying and communicating in an online class hard and challenging?**

In this question, the effect of physical issues on students readiness to communicate and actively participate in online meetings was tested. The majority of respondents (71%) came with the answer that It was difficult to communicate in an online meeting, for the following reasons:

- Not seeing the teacher and peers(21%)
- Not getting instant responses and feedback from teachers(24%)
- Preferring other learning styles and strategies (Observing and touching papers instead of just listening). (42%)
- Other reasons were stated: (9%)
  - i. 6 Respondents revealed that frequent interruptions (either by peers, or internet problems), makes it hard to communicate and actively participate in online discussions.

Whereas 2 respondents state that online sessions doesn't allow them to freely



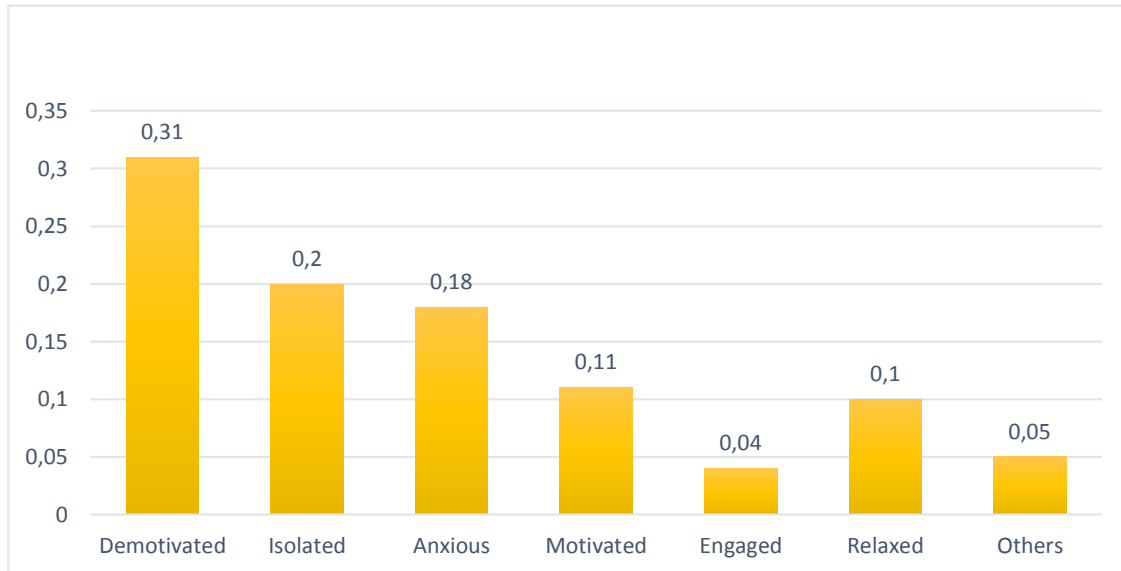
express themselves due to the time restrictions.

- **Figure 2.5:** What makes online communication challenging.

#### 8) Question 08 Communication in an online class makes you feel:

In this question, the importance of feelings on active online communication and learning was tackled . The results revealed that :

- Negative feelings are associated with communicating and speaking-up in an online meeting : demotivation, anxiety, isolation, boredom ,and frustration.
- On the other hand, online classroom communication can be -in some cases- associated with positive feelings for some respondents: motivation, relaxation ,and engagement.
- Some Respondents stated “other” feelings that are sometimes associated with the online communication experience namely, lack of interest. The tables below explains it all:



• **Figure 2.6:**Students' Psychological status in online communication.

**9) Question 09 Were you misunderstood while communicating online with your classmates?**

This question aimed at testing, whether the different social and cultural backgrounds of students could lead to misunderstandings in online classes, thus creating a barrier. 30% of respondents faced the problem of being misunderstood. Whereas 70% had never Faced such a problem.

The respondents who were misunderstood once in an online meeting, were asked to explain. Their answers were qualitatively analysed and revealed the following:

- Absence of non verbal communication makes it hard to get the meaning through.
- Different interpretations of the same word or expression often leads to misunderstandings in online discussions.
- Teachers ignorance to a student's question leads to misunderstandings; untrained teachers.
- Finally, continuous interruptions by peers and Internet risks to lose the essence of ideas.

• **Rubric three: Solutions**

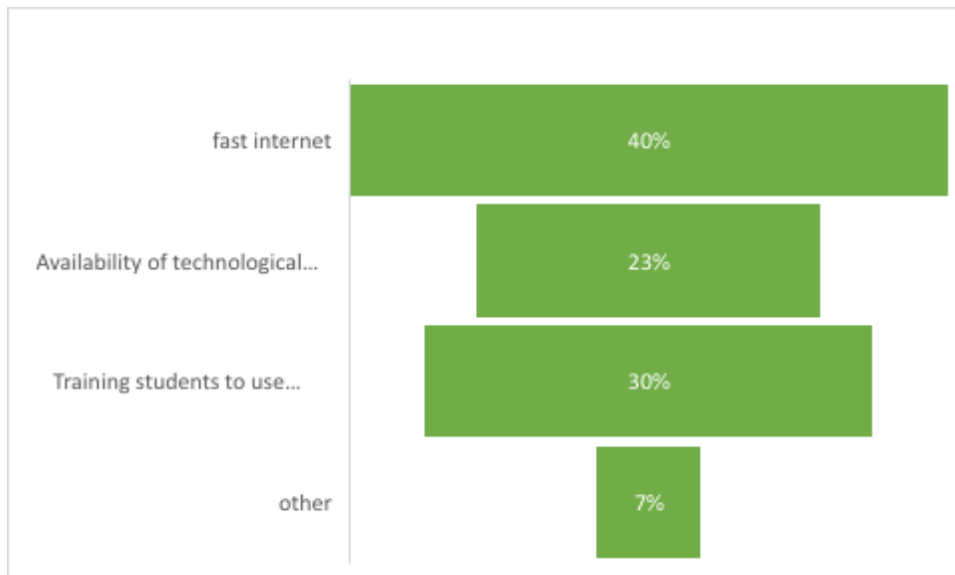


This part of the questionnaire attempts to figure out some key solutions to problems and challenges detected above. It is devised into 6 open and close ended questions. Its qualitative and quantitative analysis unveiled important results as shown in the following pages:

### **10) Question 10 Joining Online meetings can be facilitated through:**

This question attempted to investigate Respondents personal perceptions of what can facilitate the technical side of joining online classes. As it appears in the figure below , They answered that some solutions would facilitate the operation namely:

- Fast internet(39%).
- Availability of technological devices(23%).
- Training students and teachers to use technology(30%).
- Other solutions were stated: (7%)
  - i. Organising study days, or workshops aimed at training both students and their teachers to use technology and to get familiar with terms associated with online learning.
  - ii. Minimizing the number of students in each class, to make sure that everyone joins and participates.
  - iii. Training teachers to run and handle an online meeting.



- **Figure 2.7:**Solutions to facilitate online meetings.

**Question 11 You prefer online meetings on teams to be organised: on a regular basis? Or as many times as needed?**

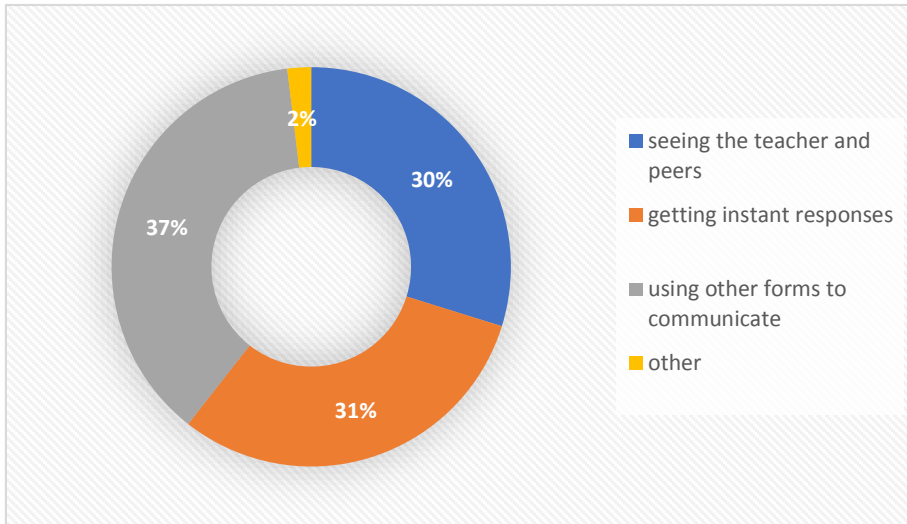
This question attempted to test students preferences regarding online meetings schedule. The majority of respondents (87%) said , they would like their online classes on teams to be regularly organised, following a time table. As a matter of fact, online learning would be much more productive if it was based on conditions that suits everyone. It is therefore very important to take into consideration, the time preferences and restrictions.

**11)Question 12 What would make it easier to study and interact with classmates in an online class?**

This question is aimed at finding solutions that would make interacting in an online class easier, in terms of physical issues. Respondents answered that interacting in an online class would be less challenging if it was possible to:

- To see teachers and mates (30%).
- To get instant responses and feedback from the teacher (31%).
- To use other forms of communication such as texting (37%).
- Other (2%)of answers were provided namely

- i. Allowing more interaction that is controlled by the teacher; it would be beneficial if students speak more in online meetings, and the teacher adopts the role of a “facilitator” and “mentor”.
- ii. Using supporting materials such as “YouTube videos” to enhance students understanding, avoiding confusion and dragging attention.

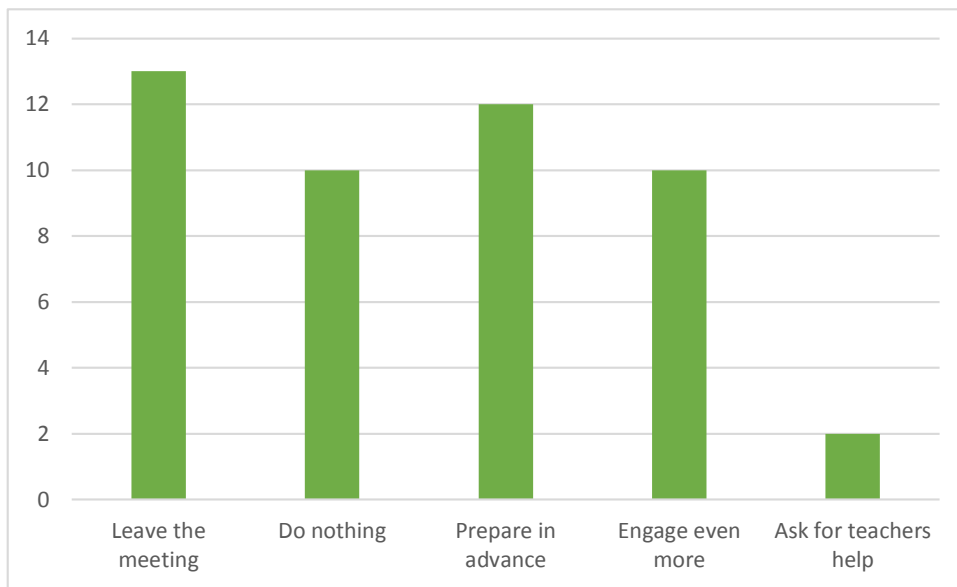


- **Figure 2.8:** solutions to make online communication less challenging.

**12) Question 13 If you feel uncomfortable with attending online classes (anxious, demotivated, isolated or bored), what would you do to overcome such feelings?**

This question tried to verify how students behave with negative feelings that are sometimes associated with Speaking-up in an online class. Students’ reactions to feelings like (anxiety, frustration, demotivation, boredom etc.) varied a lot as shows in the following lines:

- 49% of respondents had passive reactions; they would either leave the meeting, or do nothing i.e. keep quiet until the session is over.
- 26% of respondents believed that the key solution is to prepare in advance and build self confidence, before those meetings take place.
- 21% of students tried to engage even more on those meetings until it becomes a habitual thing to study online.

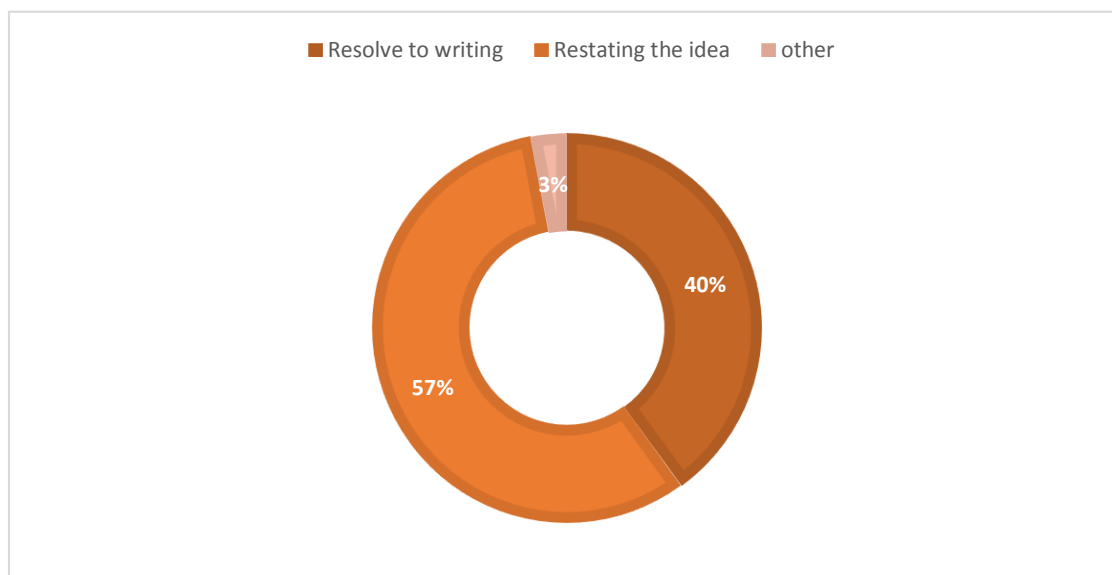


- Only 4% of students said that they would ask for teachers help to overcome feeling of fear and anxiety.
- **Figure 2.9:** Students' handling of negative feelings.

**13) Question 14 What would you do if You were misunderstood by your classmates in an online discussion?**

How do students manage to overcome misunderstandings in a teams meeting, and avoiding them?. Answers to this question varied a lot from one student to another, yet, a pattern was detected as shown in the figure below:

- Some students would resolve to writing in order to avoid misunderstandings.(40%)
- Some students would restate their idea in other words to make themselves clear (57%)
- “Other” 3% of students would do no nothing if they were misunderstood, they would rather just leave.



- **Figure 2.10:** Students' dealing with misunderstandings.

**14) Question 15 please suggest some solutions that would make the online communication and learning more productive and enjoyable.**

Many suggestions which were provided are stated according to its frequency rates:

- Training teachers to run and handle an online classroom.
- Organising a regular timetable with enough hours.
- Training both students and their teachers to use technology.
- Improving the telecommunication systems; internet.
- Resolving to video chats instead of just listening.
- Reducing students number for each class.
  - Forbidding unpermitted interaction to avoid interruptions.
  - Recording meetings, and letting course supports available.

**2.5.2 Teachers' questionnaire analysis**

The questionnaire designed for teachers is consisted of three rubrics. After the electronic forms were delivered to mainly 10 first year EFL teachers, the results were quantitatively and qualitatively analysed as shown in the following pages.

- **Rubric one Teachers' profile and attitudes .**

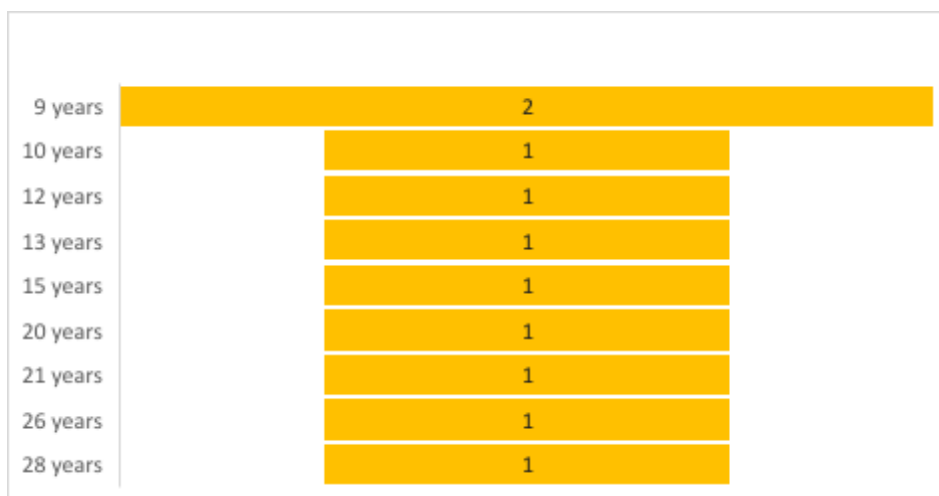
Aimed at investigating teachers profiles (gender, experience), and their attitudes towards online teaching and communicating. The four open and close-ended questions were analysed qualitatively and quantitatively as shown in the following pages.

**1) Question 01 What is your gender?**

This question explicitly aims at investigating teachers gender in order to the different perceptions and attitudes of teachers to the same problem. In this respect , 6 out of 10 respondents were Females.

**2) Question 02 How long have you been teaching in the English department?**

As shown in the chart below, all the respondents are well experienced, their experiences range between 9 and 28 years. This means that our EFL teachers are aware of the concept of online teaching i.e. status, problems and requirements.

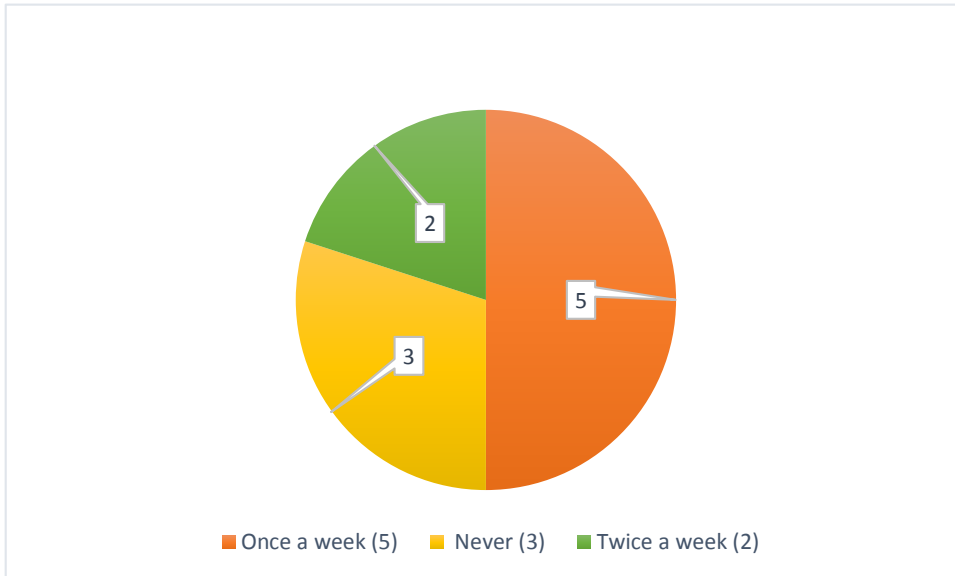


• **Figure 2.11:** Teachers’ experience.

**3) Question 03 How often do you organise online classes on “teams” for first year EFL students?**

The objective behind this question is to investigate whether first year EFL students are receiving enough online sessions or not, and whether they are receiving online learning at all.Indeed,5 teachers out of 10 answered that online meetings on teams are organised once a week , other 2teachersorganise it twice aweek. The rest of respondents(3 teachers) never deliver online lessons. The pie below explains it all. To

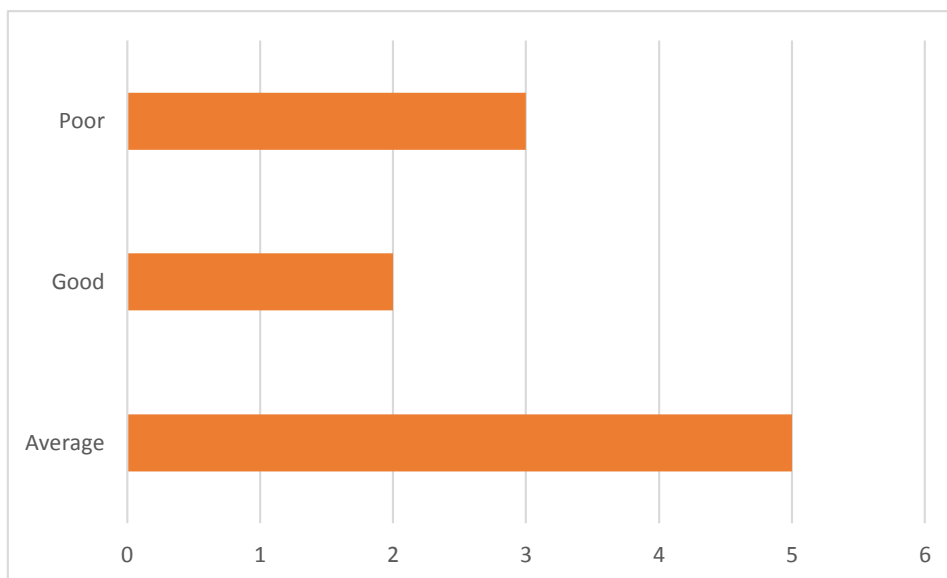
sum up, 7 teachers out of 10 were regularly organising online meetings once or twice a week , while the rest underestimated” online teaching” .



**Figure 2.12:**Online sessions' frequency of delivery.

**4) Question 04 How do you rate your online teaching experience?**

This question tried to investigate whether teachers were satisfied with their online teaching experience or not. In this respect ,as shown in the table below, 5 teachers out of 10 found the teaching experience “average”, while 2 teachers described it as”good”. Yet, 3 teachers thought that online teaching is “ poor”. This means that something is going wrong, thus, it is up to the next rubric to unveil the issues related to online meetings and classes.



- **Figure 2.13:** Online teaching experience ratings.

**Rubric two Investigating the barriers.**

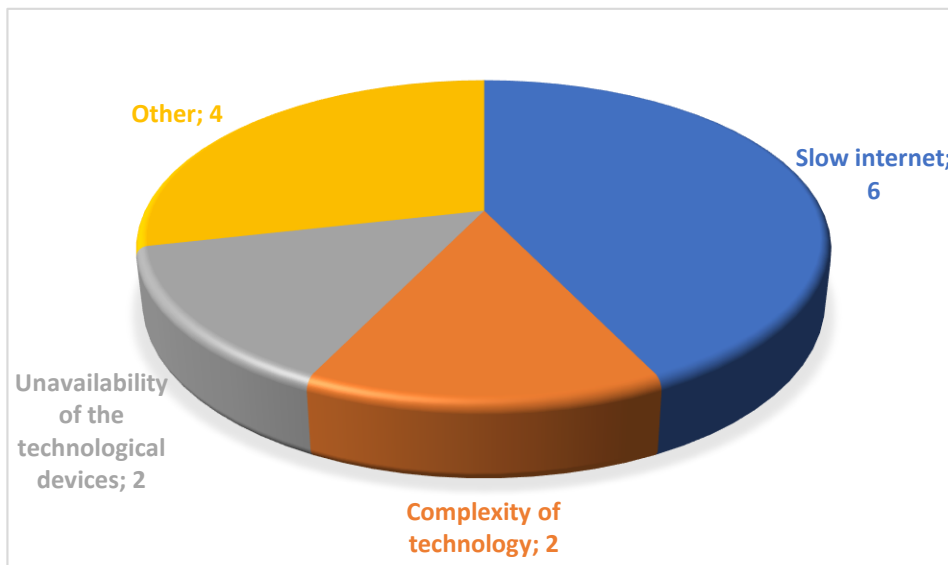
The previous rubric revealed that teachers were not so satisfied with online teaching and teams meetings. This rubric is therefore dedicated to investigate the reasons behind their dissatisfaction i.e., difficulties and problems encountered. Six open and close-ended questions were qualitatively and quantitatively analyzed and unveiled several types of difficulties and barriers encountered by teachers once in an online class. The next few pages explain it all.

**5) Question 05 Is The task of organising an online meeting difficult? or easy?**

This question attempted to detect to which extent the task of organising online meetings is difficult i.e., are teams, zoom and other discussion rooms easy to use from the technical side? especially for those teachers who are less acquainted with latest technologies. In this respect, half of first year EFL teachers “5” found it easy to join and organise an online class. Yet, the other half found it quite difficult.

When the respondents were asked about, **why is the task of organising an online class difficult?** The majority of teachers (6 out of 10) said that it was because of slow internet, 2 teachers said it was because of unavailability of the technological devices. 2 other teachers argued that it was the complexity of technology that made it difficult to organise online sessions. Other reasons were mentioned mainly; the issue of the large group sizes, and, absence of training. The chart below illustrates more:





- **Figure 2.14:** Technical difficulties of online meetings.

**6) Question 06 Do you follow a specific schedule in delivering “online lessons” and, organising “teams meetings”?**

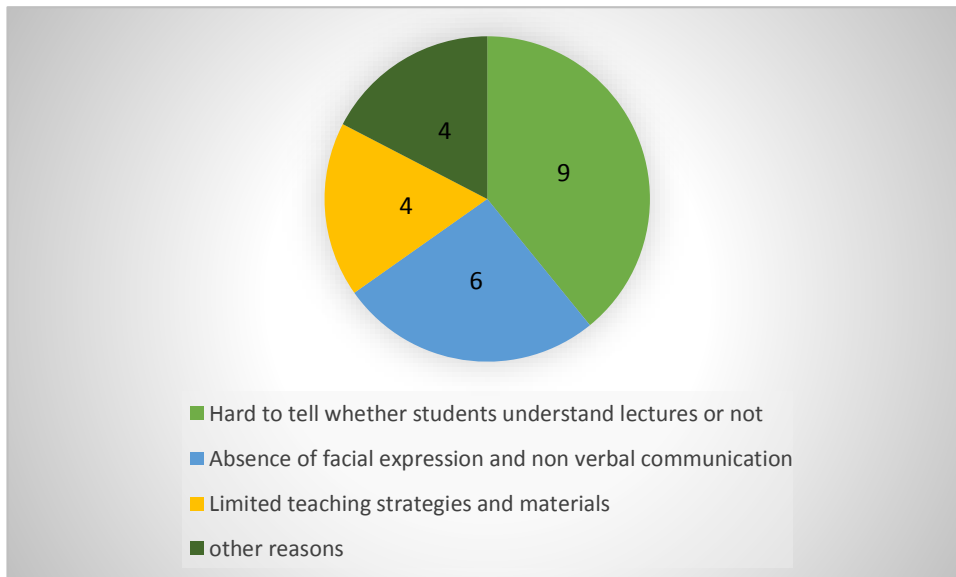
The aim behind this question is to investigate whether time constraints represent a barrier to online lessons delivery, and forbids the smooth sailing of the educational tasks and programs. In this respect, 7 out of 10 teachers followed a time table for teams meetings with a “weekly” frequency. Whereas 3 teachers did not follow any schedule of any sort. These teachers faced a serious risk of their classes to be unreliable and overloaded with information ie, Teachers who organized meetings randomly -less than what is required- tend to share too much information in few sessions, which creates confusion among students, thus, serves as a barrier.

**7) Question 07 Do you find the act of “communication” in an online classe challenging?**

This question attempted to test what effects did online education had on communication as a whole. In this respect, almost all teachers (9 out of 10) thought that communication in an online classe is “challenging”. Only one teacher thought the opposite.

It is obvious that “teaching” without any “communication” taking place is not effective. This is why respondents who found it challenging to communicate were asked to justify:

- 9 respondents out of 10 said that it is hard to tell whether students did understand lectures or not. Meaning that information delivered online risks to be misinterpreted.
- 6 respondents preferred to see their students' faces while teaching, it is not enough to hear voices only.
- 4 respondents out of 10 preferred other teaching strategies, Using power point without other supporting materials (Chalk & talk, teachers walking around..) is insufficient.
- 4 respondents stated other reasons that makes communication in an online meeting challenging : frequent interruptions by students, preferring to use the board and extra supporting materials to teach, preferring the natural interaction) .

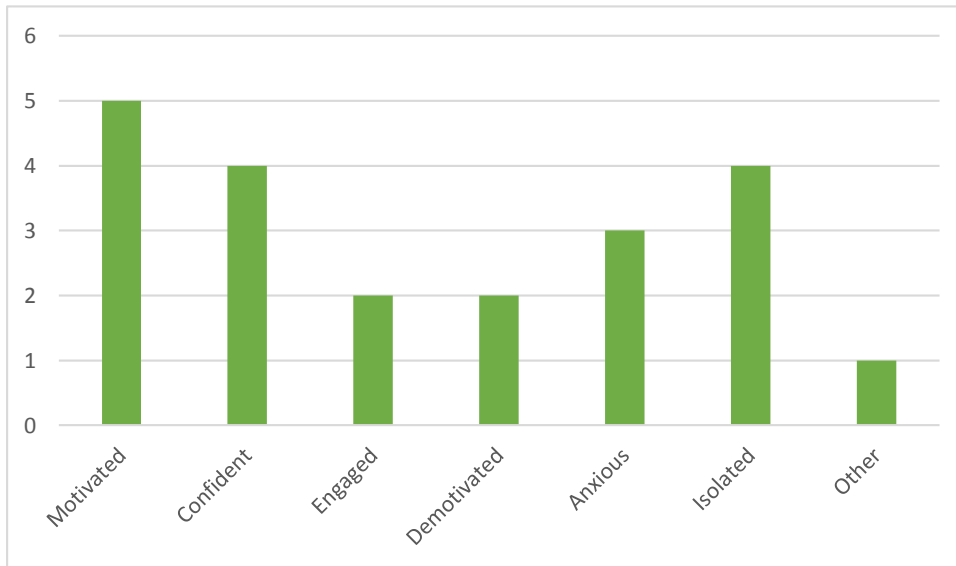


• **Figure 2.15:** What makes Online Communication challenging.

**8) Question 08 How does communication online in a “teams meeting” makes you feel?**

This question aimed at testing the effect of emotions on communication online and effective teaching and vice versa. As expected, many feelings are associated with communication in an online class , some of which are positive, yet, many negative

feelings are associated too such as motivation, demotivation, anxiety, and other feelings, as shown in the figure below:



• **Figure 2.16:** Feelings associated with online teaching and communication.

**9) Question 09 What are your students’ attitudes towards online discussions and group activities?**

Half of teachers (5 out of 10) said that their students had “positive” attitudes towards online discussions and group activities, while the other half spoke of students’ “negative” attitudes. Indeed attitudes reflect the degree of students’ readiness to engage in collective activities and be part of a group.

Therefore, teachers were asked to illustrate “**Why?**” do some students have positive attitudes whereas Others have negative ones. Their answers were qualitatively analysed and revealed the following:

• Some students have positive attitudes towards online interaction and group activities because :

- i. They feel at ease at home ,thus, not subject to anxiety.
- ii. They are motivated because of the new experience filled with fun.
- iii. They feel free to ask questions without hesitation.

• Some students have negative attitudes towards online interaction and group activities because:

- i. It is a new experience to them.
- ii. Absence of instant feedback and Face to Face interaction.

- iii. Communication online is not engaging.
- iv. Technical issues and poorly organised meetings demotivates students.

**Rubricthree: Solutions**

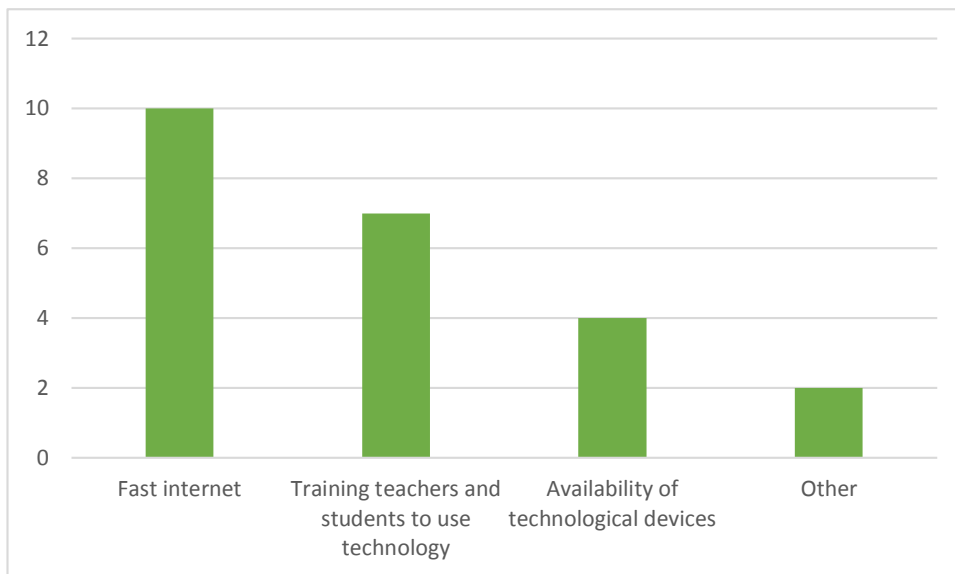
It was proved in the previous rubric that several gaps or problems exist in the newly adopted program of online learning (via teams) which in turn neglects communication. This part of the questionnaire is concerned with addressing those problems and seeking solutions. Six open and close-ended questions were analysed qualitatively and quantitatively as shown in the up coming pages.

**10) Question 10: What would make the task of organising an online meeting and joining one easier?**

This question attempted at seeking solutions to solve the technical issues that were spotlighted earlier. In this respect:

- All teachers agreed that “fast internet” would be the key solution to make organising online meetings easier.
- 7 out of 10 teachers believed that training students and teachers to use technology would solve the matter.
- 4 out of 10 teachers answered that in order to organise online classes, technological devices should be available first.
- 2 other respondents insisted on the fact that most of teachers -especially the ones who are old- are not accustomed to use technology, which requires training.

- 



- **Figure 2.17:** Solutions to technical issues.

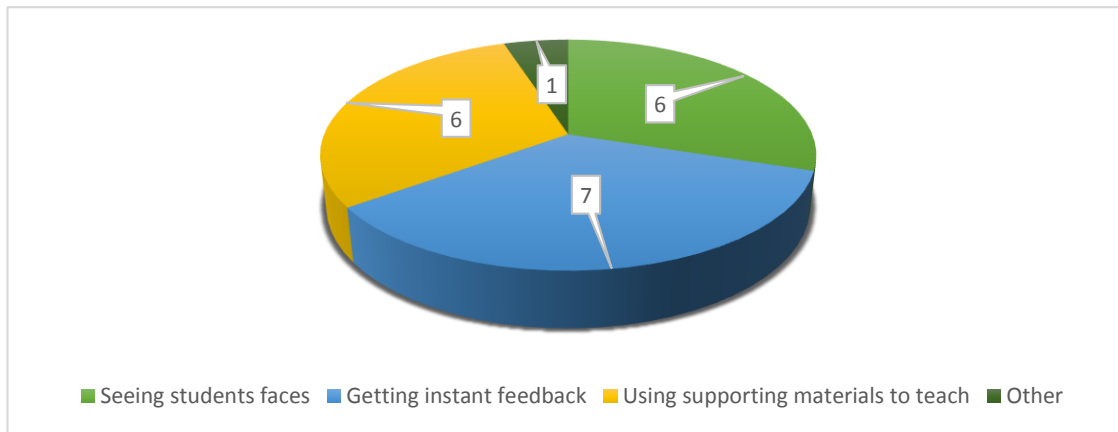
**11) Question 11 You prefer your online meeting schedule to be regular? or designed on the basis of as much as it is needed?**

The objective behind this question is to decide the suitable “temporal” conditions and time management (since there is no perfect timing that suits everyone). Issues of schedule and time table can greatly participate in the success or failure of online learning, as it manipulates students readiness to engage and to interact ie, communicate. In this respect, the majority of teachers (7 out of 10) respondents do follow a timetable in delivering online lessons with a frequency already tackled in question 3 ; once or twice a week. The remaining 3 respondents didn’t seem to be following any schedule of any sort, they rather do it on the basis of necessity. It is worth noting the significance of following a regular schedule with a reasonable frequency of classes for effective online teaching learning experience.

**12) Question 12 Teaching online would be less challenging if:**

This question tried to detect teachers suggestions to not only effective online teaching, but more importantly effective “communication” between teachers and learners, Indeed “communication” is a victim of online classes that is occasionally ignored due to some reasons mentioned in question (7). In the same line of thought:

- 7 out of 10 teachers answered that teaching and communication would be less challenging if they could get instant feedback and answers from their students.
- 6 out of 10 teachers answered that it would be nice if they could see their students faces instead of just avatars.
- 6 out of 10 teachers answered with the importance of using extra supporting materials to teach instead of just power points.
- 10 “other” teacher said that teaching in general and “communication” especially would be less challenging if groups were of a smaller size

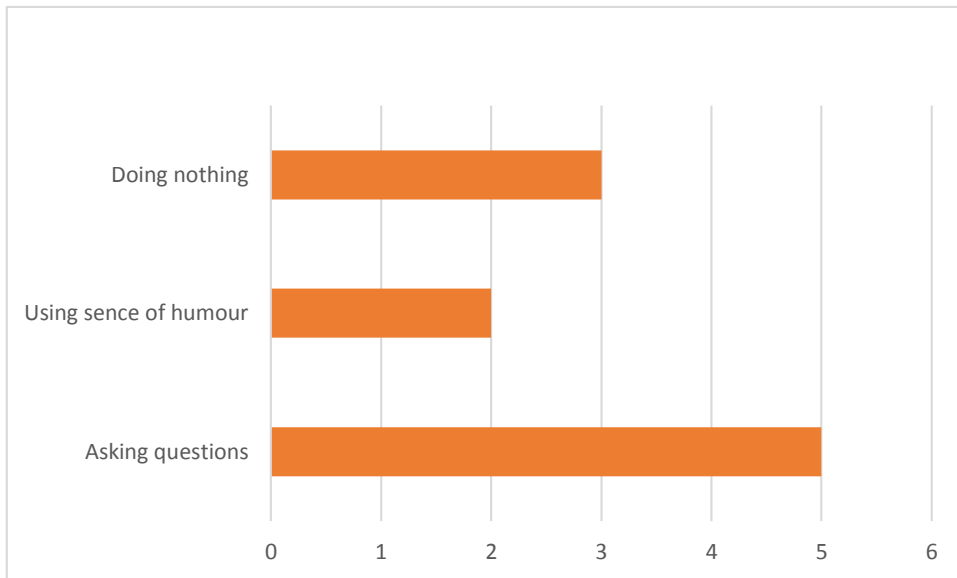


• **Figure 2.18:** What makes Teaching Online less challenging.

**13) Question 13 How do you manage to help your students overcome feelings like anxiety and frustration?**

This question attempted to address the psychological issues and negative feelings associated with the experience of online communication. Each Teacher has his unique way of addressing such issues. Yet the broad lines were provided:

- Half of teachers (5) attempted to address feelings of isolation and anxiety through “asking questions” and engage students even more.
- 2 out of 10 teachers addressed feelings of boredom through creating a relaxing friendly environment, they said that they “gave students floor to express” and sometimes they used “sense of humour” .
- 3 out of 10 teachers did not seem to be aware of the importance of addressing the psychological part . They said that they usually “do nothing” to help students overcome negative feelings since they were already against online meetings. It is Those teachers.
- ignorance that makes it difficult for both students and their teachers to communicate and engage in fruitful discussions.



• **Figure 2.19:** How teachers handle students with negative feelings.

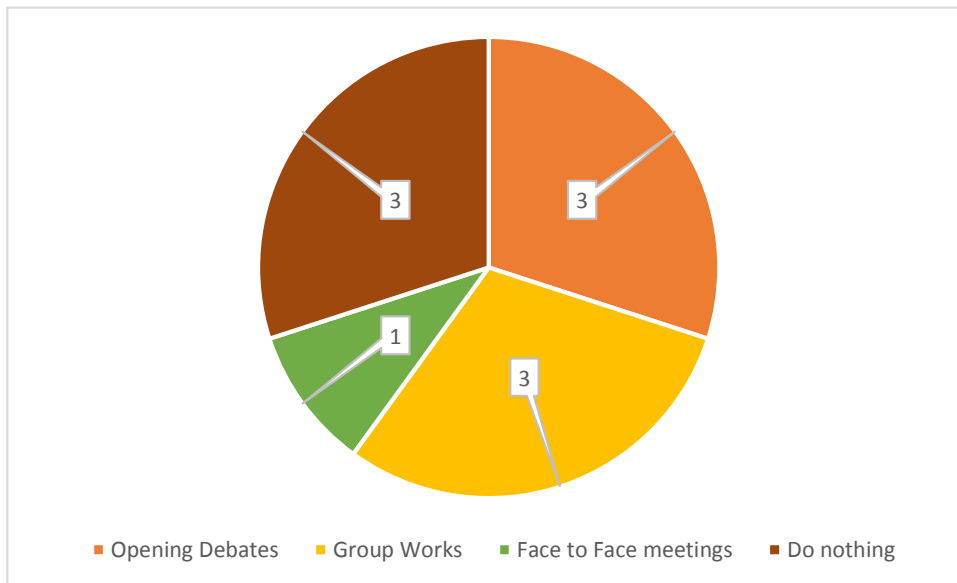
**14) Question 14 In order to create a sense of community between your students, what do you usually do?**

Socializing is an important element of any classroom, face to face be it or online, it is conducive to "communication". This question aimed at investigating what strategies did the teachers adopt to create small communities and encourage "communication" in online groups. Answers from teachers varied a lot, yet a pattern was detected:

- 3 teachers out of 10 said that they resorted to engaging their students in open debates, and encouraged interactions between learners inside the virtual classroom.
- 3 teachers out of 10 agreed that the key solution to create a sense of community in any setting is "group work", they said that they sometimes deliver tasks that require collaborative work to enhance their interpersonal communication skills.
- A teacher said that only face to face meeting that could build a sense of community.
- 3 teachers however, said that they would do "nothing special" to create a sense of group between online Students. It is worth noting for the second time that teachers



- Ignorance and neglect of the important social parts makes it hard for both students and teachers to feel at ease and freely express themselves.



• **Figure 2.20:** Teachers' attempts to create a sense of community among students.

**15) Question 15 Please suggest some solutions that would make online learning in general and “communication” especially more productive and fruitful.**

Several suggestions to improve online learning and communication were provided by teachers, They are listed below according to their repetition rates:

- Working on improving the technical side namely; telecommunication services and providing a fast internet.
- Training both students and teachers to use technology.
- Turning the cameras on would be helpful for both the Teacher and the learner to see each other.
- Online sessions should be organised on a regular basis, scheduled by the administration to avoid overlapping.
- Create interesting courses using a variety of materials.
- Develop learners awareness and engage them in collaborative tasks i.e, create a community.

**2.6 Discussion of the main results**

In order to test the hypotheses that were suggested in this research, the obtained results will be discussed. This section is then aimed to bring out the most important findings and link them to the hypotheses.

Regarding the first hypothesis which claims that *during online classes, EFL teachers and their students face some difficulties of different categories: physical, technical, psychological and social*, The data collected through different instruments proved its correctness. When checking the Second rubric of both questionnaires different types of issues are depicted:

- Problems like slow internet, lack of or weak technology skills and unavailability of technological devices, all refer to the existence of *technical issues* on both the students' and teachers' sides.
- Problems like not getting instant feedback, limited teaching and learning styles and strategies, absence of facial and non-verbal communication all refer to the existence of *physical barriers to education* as well as communication.
- Problems like instability of online sessions schedule and the insufficiency of hours dedicated to online education prove the existence of *temporal Issues*.
- Depicting negative feelings associated with online discussions such as: boredom, lack of interest, anxiety, and shyness prove the researcher was right in assuming some *psychological barriers* to online learning.

Finally, all the above mentioned obstacles, besides some teachers' low professionalism online, i.e., teachers who let personal emotions and thoughts interfere in the delivery of the lecture, together with the different cultural and social backgrounds of students, participate in creating another category of difficulties: *the social barrier*. Indeed this barrier prevents students and teachers from interacting, exchanging ideas and from having an effective communication. Thus it prevents an efficient education to take place.

Regarding the second hypothesis, which claims that *some solutions can be helpful for both students and teachers to cope with the situation such as receiving training in online teaching and learning, sticking to a learner-centered approach, and adopting*

*several teaching and learning strategies*, also proved to be correct. Some practical steps to overcome the previously mentioned barriers were revealed by the results.

When taking a look to the analysis of the 3<sup>rd</sup> rubric of both questionnaires, some solutions are suggested by informants:

- Providing fast internet and technological devices together with training, would help teachers and students overcome *the technical issues*.
  - Sending and receiving instant feedback, the use of video group calls from time to time, the use of other teaching strategies and learning styles. All these can participate in solving *the physical issues*.
  - Stabilizing the online sessions delivery through providing enough week sessions, in an organized time table can greatly contribute to solve *the temporal issues*.
  - Introducing the sense of humour and raising students' engagement is an excellent strategy. A student who is too shy may try to increase his interaction with his classmates for a change, even teachers may gain profit of this strategy by urging students to talk. All these behaviours attempt to help overcoming *the psychological issues*.
  - Finally, only attempts from both teachers and students to create a community and a sense of belonging through joining collective activities, will help breaking the social wall and render online communication more enjoyable.

Similar conclusions were drawn by Isman and Altınay (2005) when delivering some thoughtful activities to both EFL teachers and students that they had similar reactions. The results straightly unveiled some issues of technical nature that were caused in the first place by untrained, less skillful teachers. Furthermore, the tasks revealed that students were getting socially isolated and little interaction was taking place. It is worth noting that students at this level necessitate to communicate their sentiments and fears regularly to their peers. When missing, another type of problems is brought out; the psychological barrier that entails negative feelings of frustration, Lack of motivation, anxiety... etc. (Isman and Altınay: 2005).

To conclude, this section related to the practical side of the inquiry was aimed at bringing the main findings to confirm the research hypothesis. In this respect, both hypotheses proved their correctness. Indeed, first year EFL students and their teachers do face challenges while teaching, learning and communicating online. Those challenges are of technical, physical, social, psychological, and temporal nature. The

second hypothesis also was confirmed when similar solutions to overcome the barriers were suggested by EFL students and teachers themselves. These suggestions along

with findings in the literature will help provide some recommendations in the following section.

### **2.7 Suggestions and Recommendations**

In this exploratory case study, the researcher tried to investigate the problems occurring in online meetings between students and teachers. These problems have a detrimental effect on communication, and therefore on learning. The final aim of this study is to provide to overcome these difficulties.

#### **2.7.1 Solutions to the technical issues**

Working on making a stable, fast internet connection can greatly contribute in facilitating the smooth sailing of the online education and communication operation. Needless to say that the more technological devices are available and affordable by the university, the less technical problems EFL students and teachers would face.

Teachers had better to open the camera from time to time. Virtual face to face communication may participate in reducing the physical distance between the learners and their instructor. Moreover, permitting other forms of communication creates flexibility of the course and leads students to feel at ease.

Freshman EFL students and their teachers ought to benefit from a training program. This program could be in the form of study days where workshops are designed and organized specifically to familiarise them with the new terms and technologies.

### **2.7.2 Lecture delivery and presentation**

Online sessions on teams can be scheduled by the administration. Additionally, the attendance should be compulsory. In this way students will benefit the maximum of knowledge.

The course content must be chunked to be easily understood. Moreover, extra teaching strategies other than “chalk and talk” must be used. Teachers can ask students to deliver the lecture for change in exchange for extra grades. This would raise their instrumental motivation and makes them willing to interact.

### **2.7.3 Teacher student collaboration:**

Teachers as representing the top of any classroom, should initiate friendly discussions, using some humour sense to encourage students’ getting out of their bubbles and feel that they are part of a group. In other words, Online teachers should remove themselves from the classical role of an instructor. Instead, they should adopt the role of a guide, monitor, observer, diagnostician..etc.

Interaction between tutors and tutees should be promoted. Students should feel free to consult their teachers and ask for their help whenever they face a trouble.

An other way to reduce the physical and psychological gap between students and teachers is to keep them up to date. That is to say, answering their questions as soon as possible and being there to direct, guide and sometimes criticize them. Such a behaviour will avoid feelings of isolation and remoteness.

Neither teachers nor students should be considered the only responsables for the educational operation. Overcoming different types of barriers without doing harm to the learners’ “Communicative Competence” requires a collaboration between both students and teachers.

## **2.8 Conclusion**

This chapter is concerned with the practical side of the investigation. In order to answer the research questions and to test the above mentioned hypotheses, The researcher has conducted an exploratory case study

The section opened with a description of the research design including the type of the study and the rationale behind it. Then, the researcher tended to identify the sample population and their profiles, together with the motives behind the choice. The target population were First year 'licence' EFL students and their teachers. After that, the different instruments that were applied in the process of data collection were cited. Two online questionnaires were administered and answered by 70 EFL students and 10 teachers in The English department of Tlemcen University. later on in the chapter, the process of data analysis took place. The process included the analysis of both students' and teachers' questionnaires. Charts and statistics were drawn and helped the inquiry conductor to deduce interesting results. These results were deeply discussed and the two hypothesis put forward were confirmed. In other words, the inquiry conducted proved that first year EFL students and their teachers do face some difficulties of different categories when online communicating. Additionally, the second hypothesis that suggests solutions to overcome the barriers was proved and expanded.

Finally, practical recommendations were suggested to solve the issues related to "online learning and communication challenges". Those recommendations were mainly concerned with the improvement of telecommunication services and organisation of online lectures delivery and schedule. The teacher-student relationship had its fair share of attention as an important component of an effective education and communication.

# **General Conclusion**

### General Conclusion

Distance education has existed for over 100 years now and has constantly evolved and developed since 1840. The most recent label for this type of education is “online education” also called E-learning. Although online education has globally invaded the sector of higher education, It was not until March 2020 that the Algerian universities started a full reliance on it, and the pandemic situation of Covid-19 had the credit for that. Although universities have closed their doors for months, education did not stop not even a single day thanks to E-learning. Teachers and faculty staff were able to carry on their missions online through platforms like Zoom, and Microsoft Teams where sessions and virtual meetings were organised in a way that looked similar to traditional classrooms. Then, communication between teachers and students was moved online. Although some students and teachers think that online communication is as effective as face to face one, others believe that it is a bit challenging and that it has a detrimental effect on education as a whole. The objectives behind this work, then, was to discover the challenges of online communication, and to seek solutions for them.

This dissertation was divided into two chapters. The first one was dedicated to set the theoretical background, i.e, definitions, evolution, clarification and theories. The second chapter was the one concerned with the practical steps that were taken by the researcher. It firstly presented the research plan, design and type of the study. Secondly, it identified the sample population and their profiles. Thirdly, the research instruments used were described. After that, the process of data analysis took place. It is worth noting that both qualitative and quantitative methods were used. The next section was discussing the main results that inspired the researcher to provide solutions and recommendations in the last section of the second chapter.

The objective and goals of this research were met after a deep and intense investigation. In response to the first hypothesis which claimed that during online classes, EFL teachers and their students face some difficulties of different categories: physical, technical, psychological, and social. The results proved its correctness; several challenges were encountered such as the problems in telecommunication systems, the lack of social and physical interaction, the restriction of teaching



## General Conclusion

---

techniques and learning styles, the negative feelings depicted, and, the insufficiency of online session to cover the complex nature of the English language curriculum. Those challenges fall in the four barrier categories that were suggested by the researcher. It is the same for the second hypothesis which claimed that some solutions may be helpful for EFL teachers and their students to cope with the situation, such as receiving training in online teaching and learning, sticking to a learners-centred approach, and adopting several teaching techniques and learning styles. Those suggestions were broadened and more recommendations were given. Regarding the technical barriers, it was recommended to provide faster internet and affordable technological devices together with offering compulsory training programs to both EFL teachers and students. In order to overcome the physical barriers, it was recommended to use group video calls from time to time and to diversify the teaching techniques. Hanging a time table of the weekly online sessions delivery can greatly contribute in overcoming the temporal barriers. Eventually, building friendly relationships between students and teachers together with using the sense of humour are major solutions to the psychological issues that both EFL instructors and students face.

The conclusions drawn in this work are not valid for the university of Tlemcen merely. They may be valid for most Algerian universities which integrate online teaching in their program. Indeed, along with the benefits of technological advancements come the obstacles. Those advancements are supposed to facilitate academic activities, however it ends up giving faculty members and students a hard time while trying to overcome the technology complexity, the increasing responsibilities with the time shortage, together with the different types of barriers that show up along the road.

The field of online education is a vast one that cannot be restricted and fully studied in few pages. Each detail is worth being analysed and synthesized. The researcher therefore has studied a single problem that is online communication problems. He applied an exploratory research where he used two questionnaires to gather data from 70 EFL students and 10 teachers.

## General Conclusion

---

Like any other work, the researcher faced some limitations. She hoped to use an additional instrument which is observation where she would have collected additional explanations and interpretations that would have enriched the discussion. However, this was not possible due to access restrictions; only first year EFL students were allowed to attend their meetings. Another limitation was that the practical part of this study was undertaken during the pandemic situation. Therefore it was difficult to reach the informants and have them answer the questionnaires namely as the latter were distributed online.

However, the missing details may inspire other students for further investigation. It would be helpful if another researcher would tackle the issue of how to apply the recommendations given in this work in real settings. It is generally known that not all recommendations are fortunate enough to be applied. Most of researchers ask what solutions can be sought, but few of them worry about how those solutions are to be realised. Another recommendation for further studies is to conduct a comparative study between a local university and another one of a developed country to observe the difference and gain profit of those countries which have a long experience in the field of online education.

To sum up, e-learning and online meetings are said to be both a blessing and a curse. It had proved its effectiveness and saved the academic year of 2019\_2020. However, it had prevented effective education and communication to take place as well. The researcher wondered what effects do online education have on students' and teachers' academic, emotional and psychological status too. It pushed her to conduct an exploratory case study research in order to answer two questions; what are the challenges encountered in online meetings at the level of communication ? and how to overcome them? Eventually, she reached a conclusion that the five categories of barriers (technical, physical, temporal, social and psychological) can never be overcome with efforts from a single side, it is rather a threefold mission that includes EFL staff members, students and the authorities at the ministry level. Indeed, both teachers and students must join efforts and collaborate to avoid what can decrease

## **General Conclusion**

---

communication effectiveness and reduce the academic achievement. The authorities too have the the responsibility to improve the telecommunication systems and impose training programs on EFL teachers about online teaching at pre-service and in-service level as well. All in all, the recommendations given in this work would never be of use if they do not find a way to be realised in real settings as part of educational innovations.

# **Bibliography**

- Abu Bakar, Shah, K., & Qingyu, X. (2020). The effect of communication barriers on distance Learners achievements. *Revista Argentina de Clínica Psigógica* 29(5) P248\_268. Retrieved from <https://www.revistaclinicapsicologica.com/data-cms/articles/20201019093720pmSSCI-226.pdf> (22 April 2022).
- Anjum, S., Bhatti, R, U., & Iqbal, M, J. (2020). A study of communication barrier sin open distance learning system of education. *Pakistan Journal of Distance and Online Learning*. 17(1) , P247\_261. Retrieved from <https://eric.ed.gov/?id=EJ1301966> (22 November 2022).
- Anwar, M., Khan, A., & Sultan, K. (2020). The barriers and Challenges faced by students in online education during Covid-19 pandemic in Pakistan. *Gomal University Journal of Research*. 36(1). P53\_62. Retrieved from <https://go.gale.com/ps/i.do?id=GALE%7CA629071842&sid=googleScholar&v=2.1&it=r&linkaccess=abs&issn=10198180&p=AONE&sw=w>(26 February 2022).
- Becker, K., Newton, C., & Sawang, S. (2013). A learner perspective on barriers to e-learning. *Australian Journal of Adult Learning*. 53(2) P 212\_233. Retrieved from <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ1013664.pdf> (22 February 2022).
- Benharzallah, M. (2020). E-learning at the Algerian university: Reality and Challenges. The University centre Ali Cafi of Tindouf \_Algeria. Article 01. Retrieved from <https://www.researchgate.net/publication/345984120> (01 February 2022).
- Berge, Z, L. (2013). Barriers to Communication in distance education. *Turkish online Journal of distance education*. 14(1). P374\_388. Retrieved from [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/286122039\\_Barriers\\_to\\_communication\\_in\\_distance\\_education](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/286122039_Barriers_to_communication_in_distance_education). (04 November 2021).
- Boulkroune, F. (2020). COVID-19 Pandemic Goes Endemic: Social Distancing Measures and Use of Different Digital Platforms in Higher Education. *Journal of Studies in Language, Culture and Society (JSLCS)* .Retrieved Janaury 30<sup>th</sup>, 20
- Chelghoum, A., & Chelghoum, H. (2020). The Covid-19 Pandemic and Education: Big Changes ahead for Teaching in Algeria. Retrieved March 25<sup>th</sup>, 2022. From: <https://www.univoran2.dz/revuealtralang/index.php/altralang/article/view/79/70> ALTRALANG Journal , pp. 118-132.

- Cohen, L. Manion, L. & Morrison, K. (2018). *Research Methods in Education* (8<sup>th</sup> ed.). Routledge, New York.
- Dabaj, F., & İşman, A. (2004). Communication barriers in distance education “Text-based Internet enabled Online courses”. Retrieved from [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/234580731\\_Communication\\_Barriers\\_in\\_Distance\\_Computer-mediated\\_Communication?](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/234580731_Communication_Barriers_in_Distance_Computer-mediated_Communication?) From <http://www.december.com/john/study/cmc/what.html>. (13 February, 2022).
- Dabaj, F. (2011). Analysis of communication barriers to distance education, A review study. *Online Journal of Communication and Media Technologies*. 1(1) Retrieved from <https://www.ojcmt.net/article/analysis-of-communication-barriers-to-distance-education-a-review-study> (22 February 2022).
- December, J. (1996). What is Computer-mediated Communication? From <http://www.december.com/john/study/cmc/what.html>. (06 March, 2022).
- Delling, R. (1966). *Versuch Der Grundlegung zueinersystemtischenTheoridesFernunterricht*. Ed. Sroka, L. Hamburger FernlehRinstitut. 1966.
- Demetriadis, S., Papadopoulos, M., & Tsoukalas, I. (2005). Bridging the contextual Distance: The e-CASE learning environment for supporting students’ context awareness. *Advances in informatics, Proceedings of the 10<sup>th</sup> Panhellenic Conference on Informatics*. Volos, Greece, November 11-13. New York: Springer. P523-533.
- Donaldson, R, L. (2011). Student acceptance of mobile learning. Doctoral dissertation, Florida State University. Retrieved from [http://etd.lib.fsu.edu/theses/available/etd-05312011-074842/unrestricted/Donaldson\\_R\\_dissertation\\_2011.pdf](http://etd.lib.fsu.edu/theses/available/etd-05312011-074842/unrestricted/Donaldson_R_dissertation_2011.pdf) (21 November 2021).
- Fisher, J, T. (2020). Faculty perceived barriers of Online education at the Midwestern university of Ohio. Doctoral dissertation, The University of Toledo. Retrieved from [https://etd.ohiolink.edu/apexprod/rws\\_etd/send\\_file/send?accession=toledo1586109439924845&disposition=inline](https://etd.ohiolink.edu/apexprod/rws_etd/send_file/send?accession=toledo1586109439924845&disposition=inline) (18 February 2022).
- Ghounane, N. (2020). Moodle or Social Networks: What Alternative Refuge is Appropriate to Algerian EFL. *Arab World English Journal (AWEJ)* . Retrieved Mrch 18<sup>th</sup> , 2022 from

<https://awej.org/images/Volume11/Volume11Volume11Numbe3september2020/2.pdf>

- Glass, C. R. (2017). Self-expression, social roles, and faculty members' attitudes towards Online teaching. *Innovative Higher Education*, 42, 239-252. Retrieved from <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10755-016-9379-2>. (04, November,2021).
- Isman, A.&Altinay, F. (2005). Communication barriers: A study of Eastern Mediterranean University students' and teachers' of online program and courses. *Turkish Online Journal of Distance Education*, 6(4). Retrieved from [http://tojde.anadolu.edu.tr/tojde20/pdf/article\\_13](http://tojde.anadolu.edu.tr/tojde20/pdf/article_13).(10 November 2021 ).
- Işman, A., Canan, O., Isbulan, O.&Demir, Z. (2008). Communication barriers: A study of Candidates using technology. *The International Educational Technology*.
- Işman, A., Dabaj,F., Altinay,F., &Altinay,Z. (2003). Communication barriers in Distance education. *The Turkish Online Journal of Educational Technology*, 2(4). Retrieved from <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED495703.pdf> (10 November 2021).
- Jiménez, G,V. (2015). Three Communication difficulties of EFL students. *Revista de Lenguasmodernas*.1(23).P221\_233. Retrieved from [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/296625631\\_Three\\_Communication\\_Difficulties\\_of\\_EFL\\_Students](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/296625631_Three_Communication_Difficulties_of_EFL_Students) (04 November 2021).
- Jones, S. G. (Ed.) (1995). *CyberSociety: Computer-mediated communication and community*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Jones, M. (2010). A CSCL approach to blended learning in the integration of technology In teaching. *Interdisciplinary Journal of E-Learning & Learning Objects*. P103-113.
- Joshi, A., Vinay, M. &Bhaskar., (2020). Impact of Coronavirus Pandemic on the Indian Education Sector: Perspectives of Teachers on online teaching and assessments. *Interactive Technology And Smart Education* (accepted). Retrieved from [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/343961926\\_Impact\\_of\\_Coronavirus\\_Pandemic\\_on\\_the\\_Indian\\_Education\\_Sector\\_Perspectives\\_of\\_Teachers\\_on\\_online\\_teaching\\_and\\_assessments](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/343961926_Impact_of_Coronavirus_Pandemic_on_the_Indian_Education_Sector_Perspectives_of_Teachers_on_online_teaching_and_assessments). (07 February, 2022).

- Kara, M. (2020). Transactional distance and learner outcomes in an online EFL context. *Open Learning: The Journal of Open, Distance and e-Learning*, 1–16,.  
<https://doi.org/10.1080/02680513.2020.1717454> (07 February, 2022).
- Kassandrinou, A., Angelaki, C., & Mavroidis, I. (2014). Transactional distance among Open University students: how does it affect the learning process. *European Journal of Open, Distance and E-Learning*, 17(1), 26–42. <https://doi.org/10.2478/eurodl-2014-0002> (07 February, 2022).
- Kebritchi, M., Lipschuetz, A., & Santiago, L. (2017). Issues and challenges for teaching Successful online courses in higher education: A literature review. *Journal of Educational Technology Systems*, 46 (1), 4–29.
- Keegan, D. (1986). *The foundations of distance education*. London: Croom Helm.
- Keegan, D. (1995). *Distance Education Technology for the New Millennium: Compressed Video Teaching*. Fern Univ., Hagen (Germany). Inst. For Research into Distance Education. (Pp 02\_49).
- Kishmiri, H. A. (2019). *Communication challenges: Saudi EFL Speaking skills and strategies to overcome Speaking difficulties*. The Arab world English Journal. A Masters dissertation. The University of Taif, Saudi Arabia. P1\_61. Retrieved from [https://www.academia.edu/44906859/Communication\\_challenges\\_Saudi\\_EFL\\_Speaking\\_Skills\\_and\\_strategies\\_to\\_overcome\\_speaking\\_difficulties](https://www.academia.edu/44906859/Communication_challenges_Saudi_EFL_Speaking_Skills_and_strategies_to_overcome_speaking_difficulties). (04 November 2021).
- Koohang, A. & Harman, K., (Open source: A metaphor for e-learning. *Informing Science: The International Journal of an Emerging Transdiscipline*, 8, 2005, Pp 7586.
- Kotari, C. (2004). *Research Methodology ,Methods and Techniques*. Retrieved December, 2021. From <https://books.google.dz/books?hl=fr&lr=&id=hZ9wSHysQDYC&oi=fnd&pg=PA2&dq=Research+Methodology+,Methods+and+Techniques+by+Kothari,+C.R.>
- Lauren, T., (2020). Simple Random Sampling: definition, steps, and examples. Retrieved from <https://www.scribbr.com/methodology/simple-random-sampling/#:~:text=Published%20on%20August%2028%2C%202020,equal%20chance%20of%20being%20selected.> (27 October, 2021)



- Lloyd,A,S,.Byrne,M,.&McCoy,S,T. (2012). Faculty perceived barriers of online education. MERLOT Journal of Online Learning and Teaching. 8(1). P 01\_09. Retrieved from [https://jolt.merlot.org/vol8no1/lloyd\\_0312.pdf](https://jolt.merlot.org/vol8no1/lloyd_0312.pdf) (07 February 2022).
- Maguire, L. L. (2005). Literature review – faculty participation in online distance education: Barriers and Motivators. Online Journal of Distance Learning Administration, 8(1). Retrieved from <http://www.westga.edu/~distance/ojdla/spring81/maguire81.htm>. (07, February, 2022).
- Martin, L, &Tapp, D,. (2019). Teaching with Teams: An introduction to teaching an undergraduate law module using Microsoft Teams. Journal of Innovation practice in Higher education. 3(3). (Pp 58\_64).
- Mehiri,R,.&Hoadjili,A,C. (2015). The integration of E-learning at the Algerian universities, Where do we stand?. Traduction et Langues.14(1) . P67\_91. Retrieved from <http://www.asjp.cerist.dz/en/downArticle/155/14/1/6342> (07Febr
- Muilenburg,L,Y,.&Berge,Z,L. (2005). Student barriers to online learning, A factor analytic study. Distance education Journal. 26(1). . P29\_48. Retrieved from [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/247662298\\_Student\\_Barriers\\_to\\_Online\\_Learning\\_A\\_Factor\\_Analytic\\_Study](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/247662298_Student_Barriers_to_Online_Learning_A_Factor_Analytic_Study) (07Febru
- Perraton, H. (1988). A theory for distance education. In Sewart, D, Keegan, D, & Holmberg, B,( Eds). Distance education: international perspectives (pp34\_45). New York: Routledge.
- Romiszowski,A.&Mason,R. (1996). Computer Mediated communication. In Jonassen,D,H. (ED). Handbook of research on educational communications and technology. Chapter 15. P397\_431.. Retrieved from [http://www.communicationcache.com/uploads/1/0/8/8/10887248/computer-mediated\\_communication\\_-\\_chapter\\_15.pdf](http://www.communicationcache.com/uploads/1/0/8/8/10887248/computer-mediated_communication_-_chapter_15.pdf)( 22 February
- Rhee, Y. (2004). What is a case study?. Unpublished Doctoral dissertation. University of Maryland, College Park. P72\_77. Retrieved from <https://www.studocu.com/eUs/document/university-of-illinois-at-chicago/data-management/rhee-case-study-95/1103176>. (13January, 2022).

- Saihi, H. (2020). Teachers' Attitudes Towards Integrating Technology in English. Journal of Studies in Language, Culture and Society (JSLCS). Retrieved February 18 th, 2022 . from <https://www.asjp.cerist.dz/en/article/125429> .
- Saunders, M., Lewis, P., & Thornil, A., (2012). Formulating the Research design. (6<sup>th</sup>ed). Research Methods for Business Students. England: Pearson. (Pp 158\_207). <https://www.google.com/search?q=saunders+et+al+2012&oq=Saunders+et&aqs=chrome.69i59j69i57j46i512j0i512j0i273.4817j0j4&client=ms-android-oppo-rev1&sourceid=chrome-mobile&ie=UTF-8>. (22 October, 2022).
- Souar, A. (2021). Exploring the use of E-learning platform strategies by EFL students and their perceptions during the quarantine period. Masters dissertation, University of Bejaia, Algeria Retrieved from <http://hdl.handle.net/123456789/16559> (25 October 2021).
- Yin, R. (1994). Case study research: Design and methods (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publishing.

# *Appendices*

## Appendix A

---

### *Questionnaire for Students*

---

Dear students, The questionnaire between your hands is designed to gather information about your experience of communication within online classes. To spotlight the difficulties encountered, thus, finding solutions. You are kindly asked to answer it honestly. It is absolutely anonymous and confidential.

#### **Rubric One:**

1) What is your gender:

a. Male

b. Female

2) What is your age?

3) Do you like joining online classes in “Teams”?

a. Yes

b. No

4) How often do you participate in online discussions?

a. Often

- b. Rarely
- c. Never

**Rubric Two:**

1) Is the task of joining an online meeting and Communicating difficult?

- a. Yes
- b. No

If yes, is it because of:

- a. The Slow internet
- b. Complexity of technology
- c. Unavailability of the technological devices
- d. Other reasons ( please specify)

.....  
.....  
.....

2) Is the amount of time dedicated for online classes per month sufficient?

- a. Yes
- b. No

If no, why?

3) Do you find online classes hard and challenging?

- a. Yes
- b. No

If yes, this is because:

- a. You do not see your teacher and classmates
- b. You do not get instant answers and clarifications
- c. You prefer touching the paper and observing rather than just listening
- d. Other ( please specify)

.....  
.....  
.....

4) Communication in an online class makes you feel: (you can tick as many answers as you feel it necessary):

- a. Motivated
- b. Demotivated

- c. Engaged
- d. Isolated
- e. Confident
- f. Anxious

5) How do you find interacting and doing activities with your classmates online, in comparison to the traditional Classrooms?

.....

.....

.....

6) Were you misunderstood while communicating in an online session?

- a. Yes
- b. No

If yes, what was the misunderstanding about?

.....

.....

.....

**Rubric Three:**

1) Online communication can be facilitated through: (you can tick as many answers as you feel it necessary):

- a. Fast internet
- b. Available technological devices
- c. Training the students to using technology
- d. Others (please explain)

.....

.....

.....

2) You prefer online sessions to be organised:

- a. On a regular basis (with a time table)
- b. As much as it is necessary

3) It would be easier to interact in online classes if: (You can tick as many answers as you feel it necessary):

- a. You could see your teacher and classmates
- b. You get instant responses
- c. You could use other forms of communication (texting etc.)
- d. Others (please explains)

.....  
.....  
.....

4) If you feel uncomfortable with online discussions (anxious, isolated, demotivated, bored). What would you do to overcome such feelings?

.....  
.....  
.....

5) What would you do if you were misunderstood by your classmates in an online discussion?

- a. You resolve to “writing” ; a message , as another way for communication.
- b. You restate your idea in other words and explain to make yourself Clear.
- c. Others (please explain)

.....  
.....  
.....

6) Please suggest some solutions that would make the online learning and Communication experience more productive and enjoyable.

.....  
.....  
.....  
.....

**Thank you for answering**

## Appendix B

---

### **Questionnaire for Teachers**

---

Dear teachers, the questionnaire between your hands is designed to gather information about your experience of communication within Online classes. To spotlight the difficulties encountered. Thus, finding solutions. You are kindly asked to answer it honestly. It is absolutely anonymous and confidential.

#### **Rubric One:**

1) What is your gender:

a. Male

b. Female

2) How long have you been teaching in the English department?

.....  
.....

3) How often do you organise online meetings on teams for “First year” license students?

.....  
.....

4) How do you rate your online teaching experience:

a. Excellent

b. Good

c. Average

d. Bad

#### **Rubric Two:**

1) Is The task of organising an online class:

a. Difficult

b. Easy



If difficult, is it because of: (Tick as many answers as you feel it necessary)

- a. Slow internet
- b. The Complexity of technology
- c. The Unavailability of the technological devices
- d. Other ( please specify)

.....  
.....  
.....

2) Do you follow a specific schedule in delivering online lessons and organising meetings?

- a. Yes
- b. No

If yes, What is the frequency:

- a. Per week
- b. Per month

3) Do you find teaching and communicating in online class challenging?

- a. Yes
- b. No

If yes, This is because: (Tick as many answers as you feel it necessary)

- a. You prefer to observe your students' reactions
- b. It is hard to tell whether the students are engaged or not
- c. You prefer other teaching strategies and styles (please elaborate)

.....  
.....  
.....

- d. Other (Please specify)

.....  
.....  
.....

4) Communication with you students in an online class makes you feel: (Tick as many answers as you feel it necessary)

- a. Motivated
- b. Demotivated
- c. Confident
- d. Anxious

5) Are your students' attitudes towards online discussions and group activities:

- a. Positive
- b. Negative

Why?

.....  
.....  
.....

**Rubric Three:**

1)What can facilitate online communication and discussions: (tick as many answers as you feel it necessary)

- a. Fast internet
- b. Available technological devices
- c. Training students to use technological devices
- d. Other ( please explain)

.....  
.....  
.....

2) It would be easier to deliver your online lessons if: (tick as many answers as you feel it necessary)

- a. You could see your student’s reactions
- b. You could get instant feedback about the lesson
- c. You could use other additional materials for teaching
- d. All

3)You prefer your online meetings' schedule to be:

- a. On a regular basis
- b. As much as it is needed

5) In order to create a sense of community between your students, what strategies do you adopt?

.....  
.....  
.....  
.....

6) How do you manage to help your students overcome feelings like anxiety and isolation during an online session?

.....  
.....  
.....  
.....

7) Please suggest some solutions that would make online learning in general and interaction especially more fruitful and positive.

.....  
.....  
.....  
.....

**Thank you for answering**

## Summary:

This study strives to explore the challenges and issues encountered by EFL students and their teachers while communicating online in a Teams meeting within the process of distance education. The researcher adopted an exploratory method of research with a case study of 1<sup>st</sup> year EFL students and their teachers at the department of English, Tlemcen university. The results obtained from this inquiry prove that EFL students and teachers do face some challenges and barriers of different categories, namely: technical, physical, temporal, social, and, psychological. This paper observes the effect of those barriers on education as a whole and seeks feasible solutions to them, and deduces that an actual practical solution requires a collaboration from the two parties.

Key words : Online Communication, Distance education, Communication barriers.

## موجز:

تسعى هذه الدراسة جاهدة لاستكشاف التحديات والقضايا التي يواجهها طلاب اللغة الأجنبية الإنجليزية ومعلموهم أثناء التواصل عبر الإنترنت في الاجتماعات التي تقام على برنامج "مايكروسوفت تيمز" ضمن عملية التعليم عن بعد. تبني الباحث طريقة استكشافية للبحث مع دراسة حالة لطلاب السنة الأولى جذع مشترك إنجليزي ومعلميهم في ذات القسم بجامعة تلمسان. تثبت النتائج التي تم الحصول عليها من هذا التحقيق أن طلاب و أساتذة الكلية يواجهون بالفعل بعض التحديات والحوازر من فئات مختلفة، وهي: التقنية والجسدية والزمنية والاجتماعية والنفسية. وتلاحظ هذه الورقة تأثير هذه الحواجز على التعليم ككل وتسعى إلى إيجاد حلول عملية لها، وتستنتج أن الحل العملي الفعلي يتطلب تعاوناً من الطرفين

الكلمات المفتاحية: التواصل عبر الإنترنت، التعليم عن بعد، وحوازر التواصل.

## Résumé :

Cette étude vise à explorer les défis et les problèmes rencontrés par les étudiants d'EFL et leurs enseignants tout en communiquant en ligne dans une réunion d'équipes dans le cadre du processus d'éducation à distance. Le chercheur a adopté une méthode de recherche exploratoire avec une étude de cas des étudiants de première année EFL et leurs enseignants au département d'anglais, Université de Tlemcen. Les résultats de cette enquête prouvent que les étudiants et les enseignants

d'EFL sont confrontés à des défis et des obstacles de différentes catégories, à savoir : technique, physique, temporel, social et psychologique. Le présent document observe l'effet de ces obstacles sur l'éducation dans son ensemble et cherche des solutions réalisables à ces obstacles et en déduit qu'une solution pratique réelle exige la collaboration des deux parties. Mots clés : Communication en ligne, Enseignement à distance, Barrières à la communication.