

# **The Effect of Pre- Covid19 Pandemic Method of Teaching on Students' Online Learning Engagement and Autonomy**

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## **Abstract**

*The COVID19 pandemic has pushed many schools and universities all over the world to take emergency measures to protect their students and personnel. Likewise, Moroccan universities have been urged to give their lessons online as one of the main safety procedures. However, this sudden shift to online teaching has been a real challenge for many teachers. In this context, most teachers of English have been constantly dissatisfied with their students' performance when teaching them online. Hence, the present study is conducted to focus on investigating the relationship between the teaching methods that teachers were used to implementing in their classrooms and the students' online learning performance. The aim of the study is to find reasons to this problem and provide suggestions which can help to develop post-pandemic teaching practices. The research design in this study is quantitative, in which an online questionnaire is used to collect data from 40 teachers of English working in different Moroccan universities. The collected data are described and analyzed using descriptive statistics. Of the main results of the study, the absence of student-centered methods in the classroom has affected their participation and autonomy in online learning.*

**Keywords:** *classroom teaching, online teaching, post-pandemic teaching*

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## **I- Introduction**

The sudden outbreak of Covid19 pandemic pushed many schools and universities all over the world to take very severe safety measures (UNESCO, 2020) [1]. As the situation became worse and more dangerous, many university teachers and students were compelled to leave their classrooms and start online teaching and learning (Daniel, 2020) [2]. However, a lot of teachers did not find this new way of teaching as easy and comfortable as when they were giving their lessons in the classroom. That is, most teachers were not satisfied with their students' lack of participation and engagement in online activities (Winter et al., 2021) [3]. Unlike online teaching, the physical presence of the students in the classroom allows teachers to explain and facilitate their lessons by using effective verbal and non-verbal skills (Daniel, 2006) [4]. Also, face-to-face connection with students in the classroom helps them to be more focused and listen attentively. These two characteristics of classroom teaching can bring about comfort and satisfaction for some teachers in their classrooms, but they will discourage students' active involvement and autonomous learning. Moreover, teachers may put more emphasis on what should be taught or learnt, but not on how to help their students to engage in constructing the lesson (King, 1993) [5]. This classroom teaching method is mostly teacher-centered rather than student-centered because almost all the lesson is done by the teacher (Conti, 2004) [6]. Therefore, instead of participating actively and independently in building knowledge, the students become teacher-reliant. This traditional method of teaching in the classroom can be one of the most causes of the challenges that most teachers encountered when suddenly started to give their lessons online. Despite the plethora of research regarding the challenges that teachers and students faced during Covid19, there is not much research that questions and reflects on how teachers were giving their lessons in the classroom before the outbreak of the pandemic. Therefore, the present study is

conducted to investigate the relationship between the teaching methods that teachers were used to adopting in their classrooms and the challenges they faced when started to teach online. The findings of the study will be an important foundation for providing some post-pandemic teaching suggestions.

## **II-Review of literature**

Online teaching has become an urgent and necessary substitute to classroom teaching owing to COVID19 pandemic. During this time, university teachers of English have also encountered a number of different challenges and difficulties while giving their online lessons (Rajab, Mohammad, Gazal, & Alkattan, 2020) [7]. In this regard, students' disengagement in online activities and their heavy reliance on teachers have been the main problem that most teachers had. The sudden shift to online teaching cannot be the only cause to this problem, but a situation which has helped to uncover the unsuccessfulness of the used classroom teaching method as well. The selection of a teaching method is mainly based on the objectives that teachers want to achieve and the contexts of a particular language teaching situation (Brown, 2007) [8]. In this respect, developing students' ability to take part in classroom activities and show their autonomy in building knowledge requires the establishment of an environment which exposes them to problem solving situations.

### **2.1. The inductive approach**

The inductive approach is an indirect way of language teaching. The approach has gained ground within the realm of education as an attempt to turn the page of the traditional way of teaching or teaching deductively. The process of inductive teaching starts by providing students with enough input and examples about a language situation and then helping them generalize their drawn conclusions (Goner, Phillips & Walters, 1995) [9]. Intensive practice of a language situation through supplying students with meaningful examples will help them make deductions, infer rules and develop an understanding of their usage (Rivers & Temperly, 1978) [10]. Thus, the inductive teaching approach is a bottom-up process since students' deductions and conclusions of a language situation are drawn from their collaborative practice of specific related activities (Creswell & Clark, 2007) [11]. The inductive approach is, therefore, a learner centered approach which is based on trial and error experiments. Discovering language rules or drawing conclusions require that students try different examples and deal with various situations autonomously until they understand and develop a skill (Chalipa, 2013) [12].

### **2.2. Collaborative learning and post-pandemic teaching**

Most language teachers, if not all, aspire to equip their students with abilities and experiences which can be invested in different situations. One of the main situations where students will need to use their learnt skills and abilities is when they are required to study physically away from their teachers and classmates. In this regard, collaborative learning-based activities can prepare students for this situation because collaborative learning helps them to think, reason, and solve problems independently (Wismath & Orr, 2015) [13]. When students interact and negotiate information collaboratively, they share ideas and skills to complete their tasks and develop experiences (Lantolf and Pavlenko, 1995) [14]. So, by allowing various input and experiences to take place, collaborative learning helps to stimulate students' cognitive functions to retain and structure knowledge.

The development of students' problem-solving skills also necessitates the establishment of an environment which encourages their active engagement, exchange of ideas and evaluation of their performance (Richardson, 2005) [15]. That is, collaborative learning is of paramount importance in equipping students with skills that help them to be more independent and able to direct their work by themselves (Vygotsky, 1978) [16].

Collaborative learning is perhaps the most appropriate approach for improving students' learning skills and their use of technology. The development of these areas needs collaboration, connection of experiences and skills, and sharing of ideas. These conditions will not take place unless collaborative learning approach is used. When students work collaboratively, they are not only exposed to a variety of ideas and learn how to question, compare and think critically, but they also develop knowledge of the tools used in the organization and management of the negotiated information (Georgina & Hosford, 2009) [17]. Collaborative use of teaching and learning technologies like computers helps the students to develop an ability to understand and use their applications and facilities independently. More importantly, helping students to stimulate their mental abilities to think , question, share ideas and learn to use technologies through collaborative learning-based activities will enable them to invest those learnt skills and information in solving problems individually; especially, when they are physically away from their teachers and classmates or required to study online.

### **III- Methodology**

#### **3.1. Statement of the problem**

The sudden shift to online teaching and learning during the time of Covid19 was a challenging experience for both teachers and students (Mounjid, El Hilali, Amrani & Moubtassime, 2021) [18]. Teachers' encountered challenges were generally related to the use of technology (Rasheed et al., 2020) [19] , the way online lessons were taught (Adedoyin & Soykan, 2020) [20] and students' lack of engagement and autonomy (Ryan & Deci, 2020) [21]. However, causes to these challenges may also come from the nature of the adopted teaching methods before the plague of Covid19. Thus, this exploratory study is conducted to investigate the relationship between the teaching methods that teachers used to implement in their classrooms before the outbreak of Covid19 and the challenges they faced when started to teach online.

#### **3.2. Research hypothesis**

The following research hypothesis is a tentative answer to the research question.

- The way of teaching in the classroom before the outbreak of Covid19 has an effect on students' learning autonomy and engagement in online activities.

#### **3.3. Research instrument and respondents**

The research data has been collected through an online questionnaire. This latter was distributed to 40 teachers of English in different Moroccan universities. The questionnaire focuses mainly on eliciting data about students' behavior in the classroom before the outbreak of Covid19 and their behavior when they moved to study online. Frequency tables and percentage bar graphs are used to analyze the elicited data and allow its comparison.

### **IV-Data analysis and discussion**

#### **4.1. Data analysis**

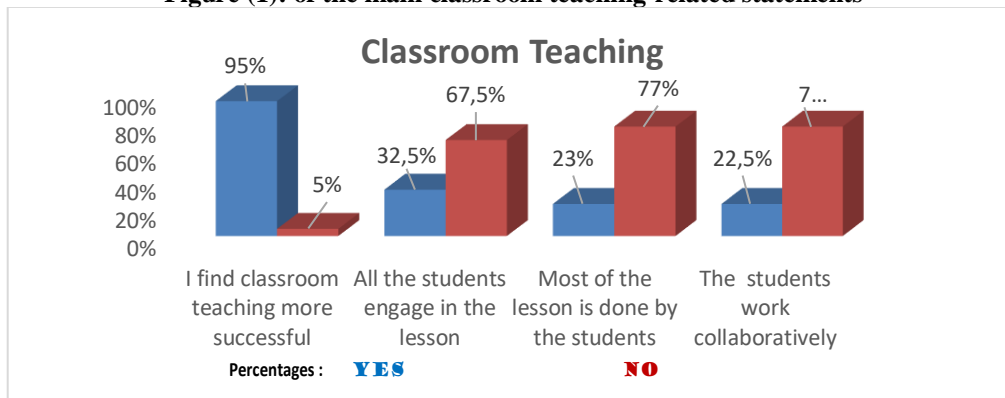
The introduced frequencies and percentages below indicate that there is a relationship between the way teachers used to teach in the classroom and the challenges they encountered as they moved to teach online. As table (1) and (2) below demonstrate, the process of data analysis focuses on analysing only four statements. Teachers' reaction to these four statements is actually what the present study aims to investigate.

**Table (1): Frequencies of the main classroom teaching-related statements**

Main statements		Frequencies and percentages	
		yes	No
<b>Classroom teaching</b>	I find classroom teaching more successful	38	2
	All the students engage in the lesson	13	27
	Most of the lesson is done by the student	9	31
	The students work collaboratively	9	31

On the basis of the results presented in table (1) above, teaching in the classroom receives more acceptance from teachers. Of all respondents, thirty eight teachers find classroom teaching more successful. As for the second statement, most teachers' reaction shows that students' engagement in the lesson is weak. That is, twenty seven teachers are not satisfied with their students' participation in classroom lessons. Likewise, teachers' responses to the third statement indicate that their students' autonomy is poor. Only nine teachers who respond positively to this statement feeling that their students take big part in building knowledge. Unfortunately, the fourth statement is also answered negatively by most teachers. Thirty one teachers respond that their students are not used to working collaboratively. The frequencies of the main statements in table (1) are also communicated easily through providing their percentages.

**Figure (1): of the main classroom teaching-related statements**



The bar chart above (figure1) shows that despite most teachers (95%) prefer classroom teaching, they still encounter some challenges there. Their students' lack of engagement in the lesson is high (67,5%) and their abilities to help build the lesson are poor (23%). These two problems may be due to the fact that students are not used to working collaboratively (77%) and on their own.

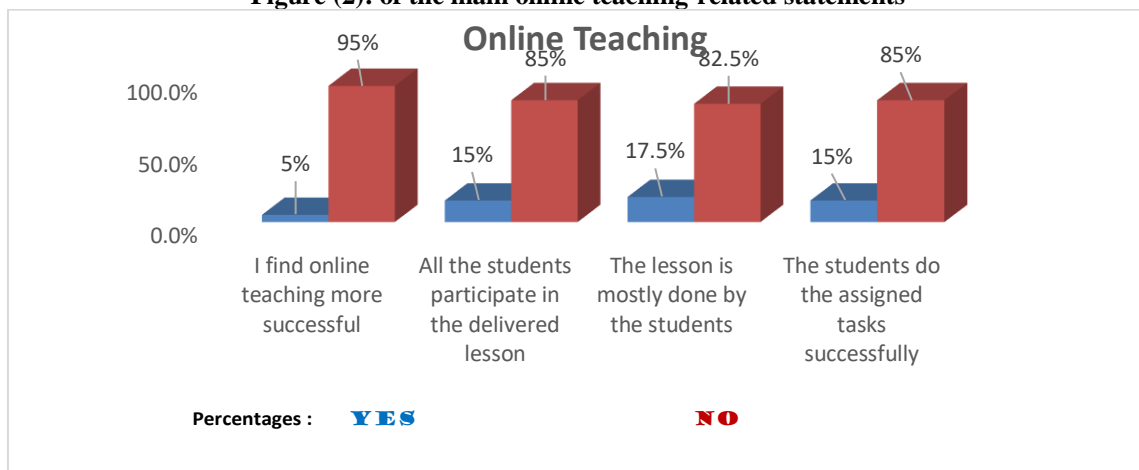
**Table (2): Frequencies of the main online teaching-related statements**

Main statements		Frequencies and percentages	
		yes	No
<b>Online teaching</b>	I find classroom teaching more successful	2	38
	All the students engage in the lesson	6	34

Most of the lesson is done by the student	7	33
The students work collaboratively	6	34

The results in table (2) above show that most teachers are not satisfied with teaching online. That is, thirty eight teachers do not have good attitudes towards this statement, and only two of them who answer positively. Similarly, students' engagement in online lessons is considered to be very poor by most teachers. Only six teachers respond to this statement positively. As for the third statement, the majority of the respondents (33) express that their students are not self-reliant. Another problem as regards online teaching is lack of collaboration between students as expressed by thirty four teachers in the last statement. The frequencies of online teaching-related statements in table (2) above are also communicated clearly through providing their percentages.

Figure (2): of the main online teaching-related statements



The bar chart above (figure 2) shows that online teaching is not accepted by the majority of the respondents (95%). This negative attitude towards online teaching is also observable in teachers' responses to the second statement. 85% of the respondents react that their students do not participate in online lessons. Likewise, 82,5% of teachers' reactions that their students are teacher-reliant. That is, online lessons are mostly done by the teacher alone. This can be also ascribed to students' poor collaboration when studying online as expressed by 85% of respondents.

#### 4.2. Data discussion

The comparison between the results of classroom teaching and those of online teaching shows that the way of teaching in the classroom before the outbreak of Covid19 has had an effect on students' learning autonomy and engagement in online activities. First, the study's respondents expressed their negative attitudes towards online teaching while classroom teaching was considered to be more successful. This finding, which is in accordance with Alvi, Bilal, & Alvi (2021) [22] study, demonstrate that the challenges teachers encounter while teaching online leads to their discomfort and dissatisfaction. These feelings may implicitly have an effect on their students' motivation and interest in online lessons as well. Additionally, a profound reflection on the obtained results indicates that most online teaching challenges can be also ascribed to the way teachers used to teach their students in the classroom. That is, if the adopted teaching method does not encourage and emphasize students' engagement in classroom activities, we cannot expect them to do so when teaching them online. Encouraging students' active involvement in the construction of the lesson by suggesting their own ideas and expressing their thoughts is also a skill that students should develop when studying in the

classroom (Salemi et al., 2001) [23]. They need to be trained to generate ideas and negotiate meaning through the learning process. Furthermore, we cannot expect from our students to show an ability to understand online delivered lessons and do an effectively successful work, if they have not received enough learning abilities and encouraged to complete their tasks together and independently when studying in their classrooms. Students who manage to work successfully and autonomously when they are taught online are those students who have been used to learning collaboratively. They are armed with critical thinking, technical and problem solving skills which have made them work independently online (Ali & Bin-Hady, 2019) [24].

### **V-Suggestions and recommendations**

The outcomes of the comparison between how teachers used to give their lessons in the classroom before the outbreak of Covid19 and the challenges they encountered when suddenly shifted to teach online have helped to provide a number of post-pandemic teaching suggestions. First, students should be encouraged to actively engage in the learning process. Language learning takes place through sharing, discussion and evaluation of suggested ideas (Johnson and Johnson,1991) [25]. When working collaboratively to solve problems, the students develop an interest in language learning and an ability to work on their activities independently. Working collaboratively can also enable them to develop communication skills which they use when studying online. That is, collaboration Second, students should be urged to use language functions in their discussions and conversations. For example, knowing how to make requests, ask for clarification and make comparisons is important in the negotiation of their. Third, students should feel comfortable and less anxious when wanting to share their opinions. Teacher should help them feel that all their ideas are important as they help in evaluating and selecting good ones. The last principle is that students need to be praised and rewarded on the efforts they make. Students feel their achievement when they receive positive feedback from their teacher as well as their classmates.

The effectiveness of these principles requires good conditions for their implementation. The selection of what to teach should also take students' interests into consideration. If students like what they are taught, they will show interest, motivation and readiness to engage in its learning. In this context, teachers may welcome their students' suggestions about what they love to study. In addition, teachers should vary the activities of their lessons. In order to help students develop different skills, the lesson should expose them to different situations where they can try different suggestions, gain different experiences and find different solutions. These activities should also urge students to use their mental functions, think critically and suggest their own solutions. Besides, the students should be encouraged and allowed to use their technological tools such as computers and mobile phones when they are asked to work collaboratively on the lessons' tasks. Technology-enhanced collaborative learning can develop students' language competence as well as the ability to use of technological tools.

### **VI. Conclusion**

The present study has investigated the relationship between teachers' encountered online teaching challenges as regards students' engagement and autonomy during Covid19 and the used pre-pandemic teaching method in the classroom. The outcomes of the study have shown that teachers' classroom practices and the way they gave their lesson before the outbreak of the pandemic have had an impact on students' online learning behavior. That is, the problem of students' poor engagement in online activities is due to the absence of their active involvement in classroom tasks. Likewise, students' reliance on their teachers in solving online activities and technology related difficulties are also owing to their lack of opportunity to work or solve problems independently in the classroom. Encouraging students' engagement in classroom activities and helping them to work on their own will

equip them with necessary learning skills (Abuhassna et al., 2020) [26]. These important findings have helped to uncover the sources of teachers' encountered online teaching challenges as regards students' engagement and autonomy. On the basis of the study's results, a number of collaborative learning suggestions have been provided to help improve the quality of post-pandemic teaching and ensure its continuity.

### **VII. Limitations of the study**

There are some limitations in this study that should be considered before generalizing the results more widely. First, the study is limited to displaying and explaining some causes of students' disengagement and heavy dependence on their teachers when suddenly shifted to study online during Covid19. To do so, a questionnaire was used as the only research instrument to obtain the data for the study. Also, the alternative teaching suggestions provided by the study are based on the findings of the distributed questionnaire.

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