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# Teaching English as a Foreign Language during Exceptional Circumstances using e-Learning in Iraq, Covid-19 Pandemic as an Example: Problems and Solutions

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### Abstract

The present study aims at finding out the most common problems teachers may encounter in teaching English as a foreign language during exceptional circumstances and proper solutions with respect to gender and stage of studying.

To detect these aims, a sample of 84 EFL teachers (42 male & 42 female teachers) randomly selected from the General Directorate of Education in Nineveh, Iraq. The sample have to manage a designed questionnaire by the researcher.

To analyze the gathered data of the questionnaire, Z-test statistical mean used.

The major results exposed that:

- 1- Iraqi EFL teachers encounter diverse problems in teaching English as a foreign language during exceptional circumstances as Covid-19.
- 2- No statistically significant differences found of the problems between male and female EFL teachers.
- 3- No statistically significant differences found of the problems between primary and secondary stage EFL teachers.

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## مجلة التربية للعلوم الإنسانية

مجلة علمية فصلية محكمة، تصدر عن كلية التربية للعلوم الإنسانية / جامعة الموصل



### تدريس اللغة الإنكليزية كلغة أجنبية خلال الظروف الاستثنائية باستخدام التعليم

### الإلكتروني في العراق، جائحة كوفيد 19 كمثال: المشاكل والحلول

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#### الملخص

#### معلومات الارشفة

تهدف الدراسة الحالية الى اكتشاف المشكلات الأكثر شيوعا التي قد يواجهها المعلمون في تدريس اللغة الإنكليزية كلغة أجنبية خلال الظروف الاستثنائية والحلول المناسبة فيما يتعلق بالجنس والمرحلة الدراسية.

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الكلمات المفتاحية :

للكشف عن هذه الأهداف، تم اختيار عينة مكونة من ٨٤ معلما من معلمي اللغة الإنكليزية كلغة أجنبية (٤٢ معلم و٤٢ معلمة) بشكل عشوائي من المديرية العامة للتربية في نينوى، العراق. كان على العينة الإجابة على الاستبيان المصمم من قبل الباحث.

اللغة الإنكليزية كلغة أجنبية، والتعلم الإلكتروني

معلومات الاتصال

لتحليل البيانات التي تم جمعها من الاستبيان، تم استخدام المتوسط الاحصائي لاختبار Z.

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كشفت النتائج الرئيسية ما يلي:

- 1- يواجه معلمو اللغة الإنكليزية كلغة أجنبية في العراق مشاكل متنوعة في تدريس اللغة الإنكليزية خلال الظروف الاستثنائية كجائحة كوفيد-19.
- 2- لا توجد فروق ذات دلالة إحصائية في المشكلات بين معلمي ومعلمات اللغة الإنكليزية كلغة أجنبية.
- 3- لا توجد فروق ذات دلالة إحصائية في المشكلات بين معلمي اللغة الإنكليزية كلغة أجنبية للمرحلتين الابتدائية والثانوية.

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## 1- Introduction:

A large number of students learning English all around the world is enough reason for moving to teach English as a foreign language (TEFL). To a degree, most people who perform the language well can teach others. TEFL constitutes an expansion of what naturally we do. Nowadays, English language considered as a key to access the world. Teaching English language has more adopted to the different needs of students. In spite of many problems of teaching English during the recent decades, EFL teachers' role emerged by creating new ideas and strategies to help overcoming the faced obstacles (Jiang, Zhang, & May, 2016). With regard to this notion, according to Adnan et. al. 2019, teaching English language predominantly applying innovations to strengthen teaching/learning and addressing the possible problems by using recent technologies like internet and online apps. To enable the teachers be in touch with their learners and achieve the aim behind the process of education.

The expansion of Covid-19 pandemic over the world has changed many aspects of our life, such as education, which is our main topic we deal with; this led to adopt various recommendations held by the World Health Organization (2019) like social distance and health instructions especially in our country (Iraq).

Unfortunately, in spite of implementing various strategies in the process of teaching/learning during the mentioned pandemic, teachers and parents were faced many challenges that hinder the education process despite all the positives by using e-learning. Most of teachers and learners' parents suppose that, traditional methods could be more efficient and useful than the e-learning. The challenges can presented with the following:

- 1- Are there any problems that teachers face in teaching English during exceptional circumstances such as Covid-19 pandemic?
- 2- Are there any problems that teachers confront in teaching English during exceptional circumstances such as Covid-19 pandemic according to gender?
- 3- Are there any problems that teachers encounter in teaching English during exceptional circumstances such as Covid-19 pandemic according to the level of studying?

## **2- Aims of the Study:**

The current research aims at:

A- Finding out the most common problems that teachers encounter in teaching English as a foreign language during exceptional circumstances with appropriate solutions.

B- Finding out if there are statistically significant differences in problems between male and female teachers in teaching English as a foreign language during exceptional circumstances.

C- Finding out if there are statistically significant differences in problems faced by primary and secondary stage teachers in teaching English during exceptional circumstances.

## **3- Limits of the Study:**

This research is limited to Iraqi EFL teachers (primary & secondary stage) of Mosul city/Iraq.

## **4- Teaching English as a Foreign Language:**

Teaching English as a foreign language may take place all over the world. EFL used for various purposes such as educational needs, formal issues, career expansion, etc. . It is important and so necessary for learners to have the ability to communicate actively and correctly. EFL learners have some obstacles hinder their achievements such as vocabulary, which requires instant attention together with grammar in any language. Both assumed to obtain similar attention in language learning.

The ability to utilize English language effectively requires mastering the basic four language skills, namely: Listening, Speaking, Reading and Writing. Grammar and vocabulary take a key role in this process. Moreover, the teacher should present a pleasant learning to make the process of learning more efficient (Qayoom, 2019).

### **4.1 Significance behind Teaching EFL:**

For centuries, English over the world have taught with various objectives. In the past, it well known that learning a foreign language should first study the literary form of language. Foreign languages in the past studied to support learning other different languages.

Unlike in the past, nowadays, the most significant aim for learning foreign languages is to communicate with others. EFL teachers have to distinguish the aims in order to choose the appropriate methods and techniques to make teaching/learning more efficient and successful.

In (1980), Wilga Rivers have pointed out seven types of objectives:

- 1- To enhance the learners' own culture via the study of literature and philosophy using the new language.
- 2- To improve the pupils' intellectual capacities via studying another language.
- 3- To enhance the learners' knowledge of how language operates and to get them, via studying another language, develop a deeper understanding of how their language functioning.
- 4- To educate the learners reading another language with understanding so they can remain current of modern writing, research and information.
- 5- To provide the learners the ability to express themselves inside another context, semantically and culturally.
- 6- To lead the learners to a deeper understanding of individuals beyond national borders, by providing them a compassionate view into the methods of people's live and thinking.
- 7- To equip the learners with the abilities to allow them communicate verbally and, to some extent, occupational situations, with other users of language from different nations.

English in the present becomes an international language and the most means to communicate people and link them with various cultures of the world.

#### **4.2 Learners' Need:**

As being English an international language to keep people in touch around the globe, it is indispensable to get more information of that language for efficient and valuable communication. EFL learners are mastering language well when they begin in early stages.

Applied linguists, other researchers and even psychologists (Gardner & Lambert, 1972; Corder, 1973) have set down some instruction should be involved during EFL learning process. Effective EFL classroom instruction:

- a- Language should be presented in an easy way.
- b- Sufficient period should offered to the students.
- c- Instead editing, encouragement should be to use proper English.
- d- Work in groups.
- e- Using the outcomes of standardized exams and multiple-choice questions carefully.
- f- Motivation, it plays an essential role during the language learning process.

#### **4.3 The Teacher's Role in EFL Teaching:**

In any language teaching/learning, the role of the teacher is an essential especially English. Sociability and friendly EFL teacher will enhance learners participating in learning process. EFL teacher role demand to recognize the learners need in order to make learning more effective and successful. EFL teacher have to maximize English and lessen the first language to immerse his/her learners in an actual situations since non-native speakers use the foreign language with less opportunities inside the EFL classroom. In order to eliminate embarrassment for using foreign language by the new EFL learners, the teacher should encourage and motivate the learners to practice the new language widely inside the classroom (Biggie, 1971; Gardner & Lambert, 1972). A successful EFL classroom should be well prepared and using English in a regular way. This could be done including diverse activities such as directing the learners to their jobs, monitoring and dominating their behaviors, clarifying activities, etc. .

#### **5- Electronic Learning:**

E-learning is the process of using information and communication technology to transfer and use data in a training environment where instructors and students are geographically and temporally apart in order to enhance the learning experience and execution of the students (Keller et al., 2007). Delivering a course via electronic means is known as e-learning; this includes online learning, online classes, online cooperation, and material distribution over the internet. According to Horton (2011),

e-learning is the dissemination of numerous rules over all electronic media, including the internet, intranets, and extranets. E-learning environments decrease the cost of planning, increasing revenue for educational foundations (Alshurideh et al., 2021). Teaching and learning are changing due to the variety of communication technologies, which include text, visual, and voice. They may also expand engagement over time and space. A greater awareness of how to utilize e-learning apps to improve the educational experience at a reasonable cost has coincided with the acceptance of these tools throughout the past ten years.

Covid-19, a virus covered all over the globe, affected many aspects of the life including education, other exceptional circumstances might also affect as well. These unexpected huge events effected the system of learning and forced to apply different strategies concerning teaching/learning process such as distance learning, online teaching/learning, external learning and e-learning.

Iraqi teachers have faced and still in teaching English. Adapting e-learning with a short period becomes a main challenge to Iraqi teachers. That also required conducting an online examination, which is difficult to be construct and control. Arora and Srinivasan (2020) stated online issues, a lack of (experience, awareness, interest), less of participation and interaction which considered a major problem encountered by teachers in online teaching process. Besides, teachers faced some other kinds of challenges related to sufficient equipment for achieving online teaching such as laptops, smartphones, internet and microphones (Kuap et al. 2020). Consequently, Verma et al. (2020) mentioned that there are lack of sufficient trained teachers to be work online and face challenge to accept the new teaching system. In the case of learners, a large number intentionally reflect their indiscipline by doing annoying behaviours like eating, playing games and music and sending bad comments using other users (Punit and Qz.com, 2020). Nine major online teaching barriers categorised by Berge and Mrozowski, (1999) like Academic, Fiscal, Geographic, Governance, Labour management, Legal, Student support, Technical and Culture.

## **6- Methodology:**

### **6.1 The Procedural Design:**

For the present study the researcher employed a questionnaire of (18) statements to figure out the problems that teachers may encounter and solutions from the point of the teachers' view.

## **6.2 Population:**

The population included Iraqi EFL teachers of the city of Mosul/ Iraq.

## **6.3 The Sample:**

The researcher randomly chose (84) EFL teachers; 42 male and 42 female.

## **6.4 Instrument: The Questionnaire:-**

The researcher has designed a questionnaire to achieve the purpose behind the study. The instrument consisted of (18) statements, which are reflect the problems that teachers may face in teaching English as a foreign language during exceptional circumstances. Each statement included three types of degree (large, medium and few).

## **7. The results:**

The current research based on three aims:

### **The First Aim:**

" Find out the most common problems that teachers encounter in teaching English as a foreign language during exceptional circumstances with appropriate solutions".

The results shown in table (1):

**Table (1): Most Common Problems that Teachers face in Teaching English during Exceptional Circumstances**

<b>Items</b>	<b>Sharpness</b>	<b>Weight percentile</b>	<b>New arrangement</b>
<b>1</b>	2.452	81.75%	11
<b>2</b>	2.393	79.76%	14
<b>3</b>	2.500	83.33%	7
<b>4</b>	2.488	82.94%	9
<b>5</b>	2.583	86.11%	1
<b>6</b>	2.488	82.94%	10

7	2.512	83.73%	6
8	2.571	85.71%	2
9	2.440	81.35%	12
10	2.571	85.71%	3
11	2.393	79.76%	15
12	2.333	77.78%	18
13	2.560	85.32%	4
14	2.560	85.32%	5
15	2.500	83.33%	8
16	2.381	79.37%	16
17	2.429	80.95%	13
18	2.369	78.97%	17

Table (1) shows that the major common problems could be represented in some statements such as: (5, 8, 10, 13, 14, 7 and 15). Hence, the first aim verified.

**The Second Aim:**

" Find out if there are statistically significant differences in problems between male and female teachers in teaching English as a foreign language during exceptional circumstances".

The results shown in table (2):

**Table (2): Differences of Problems in Teaching English during  
Exceptional Circumstances According to Gender**

Items	Male 42		Female 42		Z-test
	sharpness	weight percentile	sharpness	weight percentile	
1	2.476	0.8254	2.429	0.8095	0.189
2	2.381	0.7937	2.405	0.8016	0.090
3	2.357	0.7857	2.643	0.8810	1.182
4	2.571	0.8571	2.405	0.8016	0.678
5	2.548	0.8492	2.619	0.8730	0.316
6	2.357	0.7857	2.619	0.8730	1.071
7	2.476	0.8254	2.548	0.8492	0.296
8	2.548	0.8492	2.595	0.8651	0.208
9	2.452	0.8175	2.429	0.8095	0.094
10	2.619	0.8730	2.524	0.8413	0.416
11	2.405	0.8016	2.381	0.7937	0.090
12	2.381	0.7937	2.286	0.7619	0.351
13	2.500	0.8333	2.619	0.8730	0.515
14	2.500	0.8333	2.619	0.8730	0.515
15	2.571	0.8571	2.429	0.8095	0.586
16	2.357	0.7857	2.405	0.8016	0.180
17	2.500	0.8333	2.357	0.7857	0.556
18	2.381	0.7937	2.357	0.7857	0.090

Z-tab. : 1.960 for 0.05

Table (2) shows that there are no statistically significant differences in problems between male and female teachers; in teaching English as a foreign language during exceptional circumstances.

The calculated Z-test is less than the tabulated at level (0.05) with tabulated value (1.960). So, this aim confirmed.

**The Third Aim:**

" Find out if there are statistically significant differences in problems faced by primary and secondary stage teachers in teaching English during exceptional circumstances".

The results presented in table (3):

**Table (3): Differences of Problems in Teaching English during Exceptional Circumstances According to Studying Level**

Items	Primary		Secondary		Z-test
	Sharpness	weight Percentile	Sharpness	Weight Percentile	
1	2.463	0.8211	2.442	0.8140	0.084
2	2.415	0.8049	2.372	0.7907	0.162
3	2.463	0.8211	2.535	0.8450	0.294
4	2.463	0.8211	2.512	0.8372	0.196
5	2.561	0.8537	2.605	0.8682	0.192
6	2.610	0.8699	2.372	0.7907	0.974
7	2.463	0.8211	2.558	0.8527	0.392
8	2.561	0.8537	2.581	0.8605	0.089
9	2.415	0.8049	2.465	0.8217	0.197
10	2.585	0.8618	2.558	0.8527	0.119
11	2.390	0.7967	2.395	0.7984	0.019

<b>12</b>	2.439	0.8130	2.233	0.7442	0.763
<b>13</b>	2.488	0.8293	2.628	0.8760	0.604
<b>14</b>	2.610	0.8699	2.512	0.8372	0.425
<b>15</b>	2.488	0.8293	2.512	0.8372	0.097
<b>16</b>	2.415	0.8049	2.349	0.7829	0.249
<b>17</b>	2.439	0.8130	2.419	0.8062	0.079
<b>18</b>	2.317	0.7724	2.419	0.8062	0.380

Z-tab.: 1.960 for 0.05

Table (3) displays that there are no statistically significant differences of problems between primary and secondary stage teachers in teaching English as a foreign language exceptional circumstances.

The calculated Z-test is less than the tabulated at level of significance (0.05) with tabulated value (1.960). So, this aim achieved.

### **8- Discussing the Results:**

1- It is clearly be notice that Iraqi EFL teachers face many problems in teaching English during exceptional circumstances. There are most common ones such as:

a- The inadequacy of the means of remote communication that depends on recitation, while teaching English language depends on the communicative and interactive method in the classroom.

b- Lack of communication between the students and the teacher due to the difficult circumstances surrounding the society.

c- Lack of government support in the development of e-learning.

d- Inadequate curricula for the levels of the learners for the current period.

e- The lack of cultural electronic teaching, which represents the only solution in this period.

f- Lack of interests of students and parents in learning English language.

g- Weakness of students' levels due to decisions to transfer from one stage to another and awarding decisions degrees to more than the normal limit.

To what presented above, EFL teachers offered suggestions from their point of view as solutions to the most problems they face in teaching English during exceptional circumstances. These solutions and suggestion are as follows:

- Stop using e-learning and return to normal working hours, with tightening preventive measures. On the other hand, increasing the number of days in schools.
- The need to increase communication through electronic platforms to explain and present the material, as well as the teacher to make additional efforts to granulate the material for students.
- Increasing and doubling government support in the development of e-learning, as well as addressing problems related to the quality of the internet and electricity.
- Involving none-government organizations and social institutions and benefiting from their support in addition to government support.
- Objectively adapting the curricula, not just lessening it to suit the real levels of students, at least for the current period.
- Using satellite channels to contribute to the dissemination and development of e-learning culture.
- Increasing educational programs and courses in the field of e-learning and including them as study materials.
- Educating students and parents about the importance of the English language in different areas of life, and not only as a study subject to pass the exam.
- Increasing methods of encouragement and motivation to learn English.
- Stopping the decisions of deportation to another stage and not granting the decision degrees to more than the normal limit.

So, the answer to the first research question (Are there any problems that teachers face in teaching English during exceptional circumstances?) which is previously discussed is (Yes).

2- No, statistically significant differences has found of the problems between male and female EFL teachers. So, the answer to the second research question (Are there any problems that teachers confront in teaching English during exceptional circumstances according to gender?) which is already handled is (No).

3- No statistically significant differences found of the problems between primary and secondary stage EFL teachers. Accordingly, the answer to the third research question (Are there any problems that teachers encounter in teaching English during exceptional circumstances according to the level of studying?) which is already addressed is (No).

### **9- Conclusions:**

According to the findings, the existing study displays a clear proof that Iraqi EFL teachers subtend diverse obstacles in teaching English as a foreign language over exceptional circumstances that mentioned earlier.

No statistically significant differences found of the problems between male and female EFL teachers.

No statistically significant differences found of the problems between primary and secondary stage EFL teachers.

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