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Teachers' experiences with Online teaching using the ZOOM platform

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Abstract.

The Covid-19 virus appeared very fast around the globe and caused many damages to all of us. It caused many troubles in different fields such as: economics, business, factories, education etc. Many institutions around the world faced challenges and tried to find solutions. But the most difficult was about online teaching; most of the countries suggested many strategies and methods to teach students and learners through distinctive material and online platforms. It was suggested to use online programs as Google Classroom, Google Meet, Skype, Zoom and many other technological tools in order to help learners to continue with their studies. Using online platform in our country was very demanding because of many factors that influenced all of us. Although many teachers from different schools used many devices during the pandemic, Zoom was the main one. Teachers had different experiences and challenges during their teaching process through online platforms. They had many problems especially in the assessment and evaluation part; it was very difficult to evaluate learners through technological instruments and grading them correctly. This study is about teachers' experience with the Zoom platform, to discover if teachers had difficulties with online teaching during the pandemic. This case study's outcomes present valuable information to the teachers and future researchers because there is a limited number of studies in this field.

Keywords: Online teaching¹., Teachers², Learners³, Zoom⁴

1 Introduction

The teaching process in this pandemic situation was affected in all ways and became one of the most important factors to consider organizing educational system as

transferring from classic learning to online learning. This process of transfer does not happen fast because there are many factors that impact and cause many problems. “Moving smoothly from an environment of conventional education to distance and virtual learning could not happen overnight. This rapid transformation is linked to various obstacles and challenges at this point” [1 Crawford, Butler-Henderson, Rudolph, & Glowatz, 2020 as cited in Anwar & Adnan, 2020 p.46]. Having online teaching with students is very hard because teachers need to organize and create online class in the best way possible. “Several techniques were used to deliver the distance program for a period of time” [2 Cohen & Ellis, 2001 [as cited in Shadat, Sayem, Taylor, & McClanahan, 2017 p.2]. Teachers used many strategies and techniques to teach their students through online teaching and noticed advantages and disadvantages of online teaching process.

1.1 Literature review

The term online learning is used internationally and but it has different meaning. Many authors describe this term in different ways by giving descriptions and opinions based on the research field or experience. “Online learning-Education in which instruction and content are delivered primarily over the internet” [3 Watson & Kalmon, 2005][as cited in The Online Definition Project, 2011 p.7]. Abernathy [2019] [4as cited in Tamm, 2019 p.1], states that “E-learning, also referred to as online learning or electronic learning, is the acquisition of knowledge which takes place through electronic technologies and media. In simple language, e-learning is defined as “learning that is enabled electronically”. What is more, Bates 5[2016, p.2] claims that, “Online learning is a form of distance education in which a course or program is intentionally designed in advance to be delivered fully online”. Online learning is distance learning which gives learners the opportunity to learn without their presence in the classroom.

1.2 The role of the ZOOM platform in online teaching

Online teaching plays a significant role in education nowadays because of Covid-19 and most of the countries applied different tools of technology in education. One of them is ZOOM, a tool that helps teachers and learners to work together. But first we should know what this platform is, how it works and what kind of benefits it has in education. “ZOOM combines video conferencing, online meetings and in-conference group chat into one easy-to-use tool that is ideal for online class use, group work” [6 Learning Technology Center, 2018 p.1]. The ZOOM platform is a tool that makes the teaching process easier and gives the opportunity to teachers and learners to expand their knowledge better.

1.3 Research methodology

This research is proposed to be carried out by using a qualitative approach in order to analyze and get better results of teachers' experiences with ZOOM platform. Primary data is collected to be analyzed very carefully. The main research instrument used was the interview conducted with EFL teachers at high schools in Kumanova. The teachers' experiences vary, but they all used ZOOM during Covid-19 pandemic in the previous school year.

2 Research questions

During this research, the following questions are addressed:

1. Which are the challenges that teachers face during online teaching?
2. What kind of strategies teachers use to teach learners through ZOOM platform?
3. How do EFL teachers assess and evaluate students in online teaching?
4. Has the ZOOM platform increased students' motivation about the target language?

2.1 Research instrument

The interview (See appendix 1) was composed based on the researchers' experience with online teaching and it contained 10 questions. All questions are related to teachers' experiences with online teaching via ZOOM.

2.2 Results

In the research instrument, 6 teachers participated in the interview. Each teacher expressed their opinions about online teaching especially using ZOOM based on their experience.

Question1: In what aspects do you think online learning design and delivery is different than face-to-face teaching and learning? Four teachers think that online learning will never fully replace face-to-face or classroom learning. But some of them explained that computers can facilitate step-by-step learning; computer technology is advancing very fast and in the aspect of learning is more attractive than traditional one.

Question5: How did you assess students' participation in ZOOM? Four teachers assessed students by observations such as control and reflection on completed tasks, discussions etc. Two of the teachers assessed their students by asking students' recording and sent a voice recording to them, sometimes they sent pictures of their work, and this way teachers assessed them and their work.

Question9: Do you believe that ZOOM is a very good platform for online teaching? Why or why not? Six teachers state that ZOOM is the best tool that can be used in the teaching/learning process. ZOOM is practical for all students who continue to take lectures virtually and above all it is easily usable.

2.3 Conclusion

Important conclusion can be brought from the data obtained by the instruments of this research. Based on the interview results, it can be concluded that: four teachers think that online learning can never replace the traditional learning and face-to-face learning is more effective. Based on the research, using different methods and tools makes online teaching more successful because learners are prepared and they gain data rapidly. However, two teachers replied that online teaching is not successful because there are cases when learners have the opportunity to cheat and get an excellent grade during the evaluation. Or, there are parents behind cameras that they do all the work instead of the child. According to teachers, the most important idea was to motivate shy students in order to engage in ZOOM by praising them and using interesting activities.

2.4 Recommendations

The study recommended that the school management should take into consideration the number of teachers sitting in the same office. Intensive training is needed in order to implement ZOOM appropriately. Teachers should be more cooperative when it comes to research because the findings can be useful for them as well. School management should be aware of lack of computers and laptops at school and providing with technological tools during the pandemic. Teachers' and students' motivation are closely related therefore, both groups should try very hard to work together in order to be successful. It was notable that teachers participated and responded to the instrument with the fullest transparency. The instruments helped in gaining reliable and truthful results.

2.5 References

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Appendix:

1. In what aspects do you think online learning design and delivery is different than face-to-face teaching and learning?
2. What do you think makes online teaching and learning successful?
3. What activities would you suggest for online teaching?
4. What teaching materials have you used for online teaching using ZOOM?
5. How did you assess students' participation in ZOOM?
6. What are some effective ways of monitoring students' engagement and learning during online courses?
7. How was student motivation in online classes?
8. Was there enough online discussion with the students?
9. Do you believe that ZOOM is very a good platform for online teaching? Why or why not?
10. How did you motivate shy students to engage in ZOOM?