

Google Meet during COVID 19 Pandemic: When Teachers Raise the Challenge

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Abstract

Under the shade of coronavirus pandemic, schools and universities worldwide have moved towards online learning to assure the continuity of academic activities. Great interest was, hence, directed towards the opinions and stands of teachers about distant online education. It is of paramount importance to inspect teachers' perceptions and attitudes. When they have positive perceptions about online education, teachers also adopt positive attitudes towards educational technology. Thus, they would accept the change and challenge the shift to online virtual classes. This research studies the online learning process and which mechanisms teachers have utilized to prop up virtual learning. The central questions that shape this study are: what are the perspectives and attitudes of EFL teachers about using Google Meet in online classes? Which challenges would make them resist the change? The present research work under inspection aims to give an in-depth look at online teaching and learning in the Algerian context during the Covid-19 Pandemic, by considering the department of English Language at Oran University as a case study. The study's findings show that participants have overall positive perspectives and attitudes about using Google Meet during the ongoing pandemic with many challenges. Developing digital proficiency of teachers and students, enhancing students' motivation, and assuring the quality of internet facilities were the leading suggestions for an effective shift to online education.

Keywords: Covid-19, challenges, effectiveness, Google Meet, online education, perceptions

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Introduction

With the COVID-19 -a new coronavirus disease widely spread all over the globe, many countries have commanded the educational institutions to close. Online education is, thus, considered as the panacea to save academic activities. By moving towards online teaching technologies, teachers and learners were inspired to challenge and explore new horizons of teaching-learning strategies and approaches. This change brought by digital applications, and platforms has revolutionized our teaching techniques, where teachers have had to either completely discard traditional methods or adjust them in significant ways. Making teachers and students accept the change and being engaged and motivated in the virtual classroom is the ultimate objective of online education.

Opting for online education, during the pandemic situation, was highly acknowledged as it was considered fruitful technological progress in the domain of education. Online education has afforded a wide variety of universal learning requirements for many people who could not reach quality education for different reasons (Afrianto, 2016 & David, 2018). In a digital world, social networks, applications, and platforms such as Twitter, Facebook, and Google Meet (GM) can be utilized to explore effective online teaching and learning environments (Ghounane, 2020).

Algerian universities have also made a changeover to online education. The main concern is the quality of learning, which is tightly associated with how well the content is planned and carried out. The effectiveness of education is also based on how the content is accurate to the online background and also identifies the challenges and obstacles faced by students.

Although many studies have investigated the use of ICTs in the teaching/learning process, only a few types of researches have inspected the impact of teachers' perception on their attitudes to the use of Google Meet technology in the online classes during the COVID19 pandemic. The subsequent research questions were examined:

- What are the perspectives and attitudes of EFL teachers about using Google Meet in online classes?
- Which challenges would make them resist the change?

The present research attempts to highlight teachers' perceptions about virtual classes, with a particular emphasis on GM as an asynchronous learning approach to aid bridge the gaps and deal with the alterations they encounter while exploiting GM technology.

Literature Review

Google Meet: the new wave of online education

As a consequence of the ongoing pandemic, school leadership has moved entirely toward dispersed, virtual, and distant learning environments (Harris, 2020). In 21st century education, great interest has been devoted to practical means for reflecting on comprehensive education curriculum frameworks (Pittman, 2021).

In our dynamic society, change is unpreventable. Individuals and institutions need to get involved in a beneficial change to match adaptations that uphold progress and improvement. In education, adequate approaches and strategies are pivotal to promise the effectiveness and the efficiency of teaching and learning primarily, in the poor and rural districts. With the spread of

coronavirus disease in March 2020, there was a shift from traditional face-to-face classroom instructions to online distant virtual classrooms to support teaching and learning throughout synchronous platforms such as flipped classrooms (University of Kyrenia, 2020). This research work seeks to spotlight Google Meet technology as a new wave of online education in the Algerian context. Few studies have investigated the perceptions and attitudes of university teachers on the use of educational platforms and applications such as Zoom and Google Meet (Ghounane, 2021). Hence, the present study attempts to fulfill this literary gap. Learning facilities afforded through the synchronous virtual distant learning come off to change and cope with the demands of the pandemic situation in language teaching (Allen & Seaman, 2013).

When the traditional ‘on-site’ classes were commended for stopping during the lockdown, the asynchronous online virtual courses were the magic potion. Yet, there is an imperative need to inspect the approaches, means, devices, outlooks, and perceptions to implement online education successfully. A study by König ; Jäger-Biela., and Glutsch (2020) demonstrate that the COVID-19 pandemic situation was an excellent opportunity for teachers and students to develop their digital proficiencies and successfully cope with the new learning environment. Osborne and Dredze (2014) have claimed that effectiveness in online teaching and learning is generally related to the teaching community level to efficiently exploit platforms and applications like Google Meet, Zoom session, Instagram Edmodo, and many others, successfully proficiently.

Diverse studies suggest that the appropriate use of many online platforms/ resources enhances students’ motivation, and engagement in learning (Martinez-Nunez et al., 2016; Statt, 2017; Al Maroof et al., 2020; Kang et al., 2015). However, only a few studies have explored the perceptions of teachers and learners regarding the use of GM in the Algerian EFL teaching-learning process. This leaves a gap in the literature, and this study puts forward that one potential approach to bridge the gap is to probe this issue to get data from teachers when employing GM in online learning situations.

Google Meet in Language Learning

There is a common requirement for GM as a digital online platform for language learning through which teachers and students can meet each other in an academic framework (David, 2018; Chandra, 2020; Lander, 2014). Several recent studies have pointed out that synchronous learning enables learners to partake in the learning process (Davis, 2018; Chandra, 2020). It is significant for language teachers to use GM to structure, post, and save lectures on the platforms. Effectual planning develops effective execution and generates opportunities for ultimate objects of classes (Melissa, 2020; Salvador, 2019).

Previous studies have underlined prevalent formats for synchronous learning, which might comprise traditional classroom sessions, web-based classes, and live streaming sessions exploiting social media networks (Moore and Kearsley, 2012). Mainly, it is well acknowledged in prior studies that there are many benefits to using social media networks in an asynchronous mode for online distant education schedules, even if numerous remind that there are drawbacks too (Landar, 2014; Davis., 2018 & Chandra., 2020).

Mishra (2020) employed a survey (among 260 students and 78 teachers) to spotlight online teaching tools, and the approaches used at Mizoram University of India. The results disclosed that teachers and students utilized WhatsApp/ Instagram and Email. The findings reveal that participants were inclined to use network applications to give assignments, and to provide feedback. Forty-five percent of teachers used Zoom, Google Meet, Cisco WebEx, and Skype platforms to carry out online classes, whereas 32% of teachers were utilizing Google classroom. However, the study reported that 15% of students unload the learning materials.

Many advocates of digital education prop up that to yield effectiveness and efficiency in online learning, some digital competencies are strongly required (Emon, Alif, & Islam., 2020). It is said that it is pricey because the plugins used in these platforms must be paid for. Then again, an internet connection is a prerequisite to gaining access to online lectures and downloading learning material (Afrianto, 2016; Lee, 2018).

Nevertheless, there is a significant number of studies on the advantages of synchronous online learning mode as it develops an enhanced platform for a feedback loop ,enabling learners to share prospects and feedback instantly (Statt, 2017; Davis,2018;Hammoodi ,2020., Bordoloi et al.,2021). It was stated, in literature, that this makes a facilitating setting for feedback from teachers and students, enabling them to rectify their mistakes and receive positive feedback from the virtual social group (Thomson, 2017). Lewandoski (2015) concluded that online learning promotes the perception of teamwork, more willingly than individual work. Different studies unearth that learners prefer to learn more online than on-site primarily, when exploring the two learning environments (David, 2018; Chinaza, 2021). Melissa, 2020 and Statt(2017)believed that merging the two learning environments would be an extra chance for those who missed the live sessions, as they can see the classroom videos afterward.

Conversely, Huber (2020) states that, students were not motivated to learn distantly during the lockdown. Also, a study in Malaysia uncovered that, during schools closure, students' engagement and learning attainment were reduced in the online learning approaches (Tan, 2021).

A recent study claims that, there is an imbalanced facility in terms of decisions and procedures to manage the learning failures, resulting from school closure (Lorente&Pulido-Montes, 2020). A study by Adnan and Anwar (2020) disclosed that, in underdeveloped countries, most students could not access the internet because of technological and financial difficulties; online learning cannot reach the wanted results. Moreover, university students complained about a lack of interaction with teachers, and inadequate classroom socialization (Nursat, 2021).

Conversely, Lorente, et al.(2020) stated that it is crucial to communicate rational educational policies that support government response facilities, primarily in developing countries. Though plenty of researches has been done, appropriate strategies, and adequate conditions still require investigations, mostly in underdeveloped countries. Besides, limited internet connection, shortage of access points, and pricey data packages were the major restraints of online education in developing countries (Pittman, 2021).

It is highly critical for teachers and students to acquire digital competencies (Huber & Helm, 2020). Also, teaching aptitudes should be underpinned (Tria, 2020). Findings of Shehzadi's study (2020) confirmed that students' abilities to retain information might be reinforced when having the learning materials saved on the network platforms.

Google Meet: Major Changes and Challenges

To cope with our digital world, online education brings some significant changes in the teaching and learning process. However, this shift to distance education is not a trouble-free mission. Still, there exist some significant challenges (Mishra; Gupta&Shree, 2020). A study by Chua et al. (2020) maintained that participants revealed overall positive perceptions about online learning as an urgent need during and after the lockdown situation. Nevertheless, research shows such insufficiencies, like the need for online teaching infrastructure and, teachers' poor online teaching experience at home (Pittman, 2021).

Research by Seaman (2009) concluded that online education demands additional time and exertion. As it is still in its initial implementation phase, distant digital education may generate some pitfalls but developing and integrating new-fangled educational approaches. The COVID-19 pandemic has paved the way to update our educational systems, and investigate new spheres of learning and teaching approaches (Pittman, 2021).

Research Design and Methodology

A mixed research approach was used in the present study. An online questionnaire and online interviews were employed to gather information (Johnson and Larry, 2017). The use of these research instruments supports the researcher to collect data from informants on their perceptions and attitudes about the use of GM in distant online education, during the pandemic situation. A cyclic process of data collection and analysis is underlined in this study. This research design is adequate in identifying, and assessing the visions and outlooks of the respondents regarding the objectives of this research work.

Instrumentation

An online questionnaire was used to collect data from respondent teachers to reveal their stands and opinions about the use of GM in the EFL online classes. After structuring the questions, the questionnaire was revised. Twenty EFL teachers demonstrate consent to participate in this study by answering the survey questionnaire. Early in 2020, with the widespread coronavirus pandemic, teachers have to instruct distantly and post their lectures online. The teachers' questionnaire was composed of six items highlighting diversity in learning platforms, merits of GM, teachers' positive perceptions, teachers' negative perceptions, challenges of implementing GM, and recommendations for effective use of GM.

In the present study, the interview plan elicits the EFL teachers' visions and attitudes about learning in GM classes. The interview questions tackle the following points: the significant enablers, obstacles of integrating GM, and recommendations that participants would provide for effective integration of GM in English language teaching.

The online interviews were conducted with ten teachers. These teachers taught modules like research methodology, educational psychology, TEFL, oral expression, and written expression. The researcher selected teachers who are used to employing Information and

Communication Technology (ICT) in the teaching practices. The questions also addressed the merits and drawbacks of the shift to distant online teaching/learning mode.

Data Presentation and Analysis

Teachers' Questionnaire

The Algerian universities are urged to use ICTs and delve into the virtual learning environment during the COVID 19 pandemic. Even if they appear resistant to the change, teachers should manage the situation by posting lectures and affording assessments via a parcel that allows sharing the learning materials online. They can also do assignments, and stay in contact with their students distantly. Even if this new system seems to boost their independence, training teachers, and building up their ICT skills to instruct distantly would not be an easy task, mainly for teachers who are not skillful at using ICTs. Table one gives an idea about the available online learning platforms used during the lockdown:

Table 1. *Online learning platforms used during the lockdown*

Learning platforms	%
Google Meet	52%
Zoom sessions	50%
Facebook	20%
Instagram	15%
Moodle platform	49%
Team platform	48%
Progres platform	47%

Table one shows that participants were using Google Meet (52%) ; Zoom sessions (50%); Moodle platform(49%), Team platform(48%) and ,Progres platform(47%) respectively. Only 15% and 20% of informants reported using Instagram and Facebook. It seems that teachers greet the use of GM and appreciate the shift to online settings.

In the second question, the participants were asked about the advantages of using GM in online classes. Table two affords a thorough consideration of the teachers' viewpoints regarding the benefits of GM in the teaching process.

Table 2. *Advantages of Google Meet*

Advantages of GM	%
Increasing motivation.	55%
Enhancing self-directed teaching and learning.	47%
Providing feedback.	54%
Fostering interaction.	48%
Saving learning materials in digital network applications and platforms.	59%
Supporting communication.	37%
Enhancing students' collaborative learning .	38%

Implementing practical Assessment tools.	40%
Giving assignments	43%
Alleviating the burden to travel	58%

Table two reveals that students value the GM class in that it saves the learning materials in digital network applications and platforms (59%), alleviates the burden to travel (58%), and increases motivation (55%). Fifty-four percent of informants revealed that GM online classes afford students feedback. Forty-eight percent of respondents reported that GM courses foster students’ interaction and enhance self-directed teaching and learning (47%). Participants also pointed out the importance of giving assignments (43%), and implementing practical assessment tools (40%). They added that it enhances students’ collaborative learning (38%), and supports communication (37%). Informants are satisfied with GM online classes.

Teachers were then questioned about their perspectives and outlooks about using GM. The following table provides an idea:

Table 3. *Positive perceptions on Google Meet*

<i>Perspectives and Outlooks</i>	%
The flexibility of digital learning materials	63%
The accessibility of learning and teaching resources	59%
The autonomy in teaching and learning	48%
The satisfaction to shift to online education	50%
The efficiency in managing the class remotely	34%
The proficiency in conducting courses online	35%
The comfort to use digital devices	30%

Table three indicates that informants have overall, positive perceptions about using GM in their online classes. More than half of teachers believe that it provides the flexibility of digital learning materials (63%) and, thus, assures the accessibility of learning and teaching resources (59%). Fifty percent of participants’ responses report that they appreciate online education and develop autonomy in teaching and learning (48%). However, only 30% of answers envelop comfort to use digital devices. Also, only 34% of informants revealed that it develops a proficiency to plan courses online and manage the classes distantly (35%).

The researcher intended in the fourth question to inspect the teachers’ perspectives about what they dislike most when using GM in the online class. The following table gives a spindle eye:

Table 4. *Negative perceptions on Google Meet*

Negative Perceptions	%
Overloaded content of the online class	58%
Lack of attentiveness during the live	55%

class	
Lack of interactivity	57%
Plagiarism	28%
Lack of discipline	25%
Lack of socialization in the virtual class	48%

Findings from table four show that most teachers believe that GM class is overloaded (58%). Teachers consider the use of technology in the GM class as challenging and burdened them in such an uncomfortable environment. Fifty-seven percent of teachers claim that live classes lack interactivity, and 55% reported a lack of attentiveness during online courses. Nearly half of informants said that virtual classes lack socialization (48%). 28% of informants consider plagiarism and lack of discipline (25%) as negative perceptions of GM in the online classes.

In the fifth question, teachers were questioned about the perceived hampers and obstacles encountered in the GM class. Table five provides an idea about the main challenges.

Table 5. Challenges to implementing Google Meet

Challenges	%
Computer fretfulness	59%
Lack of ICT skills	65%
Lack of training	69%
No awareness of merits	70%
Rejection to change	71%
Insufficient time in GM class	56%
Feeble internet connection	68%

Findings from table five demonstrate that rejection to change (71%), no awareness of merits (70%), lack of training (69%), feeble internet connection (68%), lack of ICT skills (65%), computer fretfulness (59%) and insufficient time in GM class (56%) were the significant challenges pointed out by informant teachers. There is a strong relationship between issues that may obstruct a practical implementation of ICTs, mostly the GM classes. When teachers are not trained to use technology, they deliberately resist the change because they lack the required digital competencies. Consequently, they would become *technophobic* teachers and develop negative perceptions about ICTs.

The last question requests the informant teachers to put forward some suggestions for the fruitful implementation of GM.

Table 6. Suggestions for efficient use of Google Meet

Suggestions	%
Encouraging teachers to approve the change.	55%
Training teachers to use ICTs.	62%

Ensuring efficient technical support.	52%
Facilitating the use of online platforms.	58 %
Supplying more interactive undertakings	53%
Providing a good Internet connection	54%
Exploring the advantages of ICTs	61%

Informant teachers, in table six, shows that for effective implementation of GM technology, decision-makers and education -experts should provide training sessions for teachers, and students to use ICTs (62%). Informants also reported that teachers and students have to explore the advantages of ICTs (61%) and facilitate online platforms (58 %). The results disclose that it is critical to encourage teachers to approve the change (55%); provide a good Internet connection (54%); supply more interactive undertakings (53%); and ensure efficient technical support (52%). Here again, there exists a strong relationship between the proposed recommendations. When teachers are trained to use technology, they would be motivated to approve the change and develop ICT competencies. Thus, they would have positive perceptions about implementing education technologies, particularly the GM distant classes.

Teachers’ Interview

Online interviews with ten EFL teachers attempt to bring out their voices and visions about using GM in online classes. The questions are meant to provide a synopsis of the teachers’ perceptions and prospects about the use of GM. Teachers’ interviews also try to elicit their outlooks and opinions about the use of GM to deliver lectures distantly during the coronavirus pandemic crisis.

Question One: How could you be in contact with your students during the period of the Covid-19 pandemic? Respondent teachers replied that with the widespread virus in March 2020, and with university closure, they have shifted into online distant teaching mode to use educational platforms and applications.

Question Two: what do you prefer, a traditional or virtual classroom environment?

Informant teachers claimed that they prefer the traditional classroom environment, where they can interact, communicate, and share knowledge online. Informants also confirmed that students and teachers were not trained to utilize GM. They stated that even if they are skillful enough to use the internet, upload, and download materials, they are still unqualified to experience online distant virtual learning. Interviewed teachers asserted that though they use educational platforms and applications, they are still trainee users and lack essential ICTs skills. One informant stated: “it is not easy to keep students engaged and focused in the virtual class.” Other teachers claimed that they are contented to use GM and benefit from digitalization. One teacher said: “as I dwell a long way from the university, I post lectures online. GM classes alleviate the trouble to travel.”

Question Three: Is it a good idea to implement GM in the EFL classroom?

Six interviewed teachers highlighted that GM boosts their students’ motivation in learning. They stated that it heartened their interactivity and communication. One interviewee reported: “some introvert students tend to be more secured and confident in GM.” It is worth mentioning

that online learning boosts student-centeredness as it heartens their autonomy in learning. One teacher said “socialization in the online class encourages students to be cooperative and interactive.” Seven teachers claimed that it allows them to be self-reliant and independent learners. One teacher claimed: “in online classes, students are provided with the opportunity to have rich learning materials which can be saved and shared with peers”.

Question Four: Do you favor traditional classroom instruction or GM classes?

The mainstream of the interviewee teachers believes that the proper use of ICTs facilitates online learning and promotes effective technology integration in the teaching-learning process. Participant teachers divulged that they welcome the use of GM in English language teaching. They added that they like the malleability of online education typified by efficient strategies and improved learning materials. Partaker teachers argued that though the panacea during the lockdown, GM distance classes are not supposed to substitute the traditional classroom environment. Three teachers stated that they were unwilling to use GM. They argued that they do not recognize the merits of GM. Thus, they oppose the change and develop negative attitudes.

Question Five: What do you find difficult in the GM classroom?

Five interviewee teachers believe that GM classes lack human interaction between teachers and their students. Five out of ten teachers maintained that they were somehow obliged to cope with needs and switch to online education. They also believed that they were inept in using ICTs as they lacked training. Two interviewee teachers also declared that some students oppose change brought by ICTs and are anxious to utilize the computer. Participant teachers affirmed that fear of technical issues makes the GM class difficult and challenging.

Question Six: What do you propose for the effective implementation of GM in today's education?

Seven informant teachers maintained that they should plan more engaging undertakings when designing online lectures. Other teachers affirmed that it is imperative, for decision-makers, to provide training to manage the virtual class competently. Informants also concluded that providing efficient technical support is highly required.

Discussion and Interpretation of the Findings

The COVID 19 pandemic has brought a radical change to the teaching-learning process. Due to different restraints, some teachers resist the change and are disinclined to teach technology. Those teachers need to take the wave of innovations entailed in nowadays classrooms.

In the current study, data analysis reveals that respondent teachers perceive the use of GM in English language teaching as advantageous and compelling. They showed overall positive perceptions about implementing GM in the EFL context. This might answer the first research question, what are the perspectives and attitudes of EFL teachers about using Google Meet in online classes?

This finding confirms the results of a study by Mishra (2020), which disclosed that the use of GM as a shift mechanism is beneficial. Analysis of teachers' questionnaires and

interviews showed that respondents appraise the learning facilities afforded by online education when they reported that it increases motivation; provides feedback; and alleviates the burden of travel. These conclusions support studies by Pittman (2021) and Shehzadi et al. (2020), which maintained that students' digital learning is positively affected by ICT tools, e-learning facilities, and e-information quality.

The findings unearth that teachers were motivated to use GM in online classes. Though they lack training, teachers are ready to switch to distant teaching mode where they are supposed to post lectures on the platforms, give assignments, and do assessments remotely. These conclusions support the research results by Huber and Helm (2020), which expose that the integration of ICTs fosters teachers' and students' digital skills. Moreover, these findings uphold the results of a study by (Chandra., 2020), which maintained that online learning helps teachers and students to explore new horizons of learning and teaching approaches. This also confirms the research findings of Shehzadi's study (2020), which maintained that students' competencies to retrieve information might be strengthened when the learning materials are saved on the network platforms.

Results showed that most informant teachers had welcomed the use of GM, even if they reported a considerable number of limitations. This result might answer the second research question, which challenges would make them resist the change?

Analysis divulged that teachers' lack of training, negative attitudes, no awareness of merits, lack of ICT competencies, and computer fretfulness was the significant obstacles that made them refuse the change and preclude the potential use of the GM (Al Maroof et al., 2020 and Adnan & Anwar., 2020).

These findings corroborate the thought of Nursat (2021), who considered that such a problematic fact might bring teachers' negative attitudes about using GM. Results, also uphold that computer issues are perceived as a real obstacle. These findings match the results of a study by (Nursat, 2021) that a shortage of technical maintenance and feeble internet connection might encumber GM online class. Participant teachers perceived that affording training sessions and assuring efficient technical care were the possible enablers to successfully integrating GM.

Conclusion

The current research works to analyze EFL teachers' perspectives and attitudes about using Google Meet in English language teaching at Oran. This paper seeks to present a thoughtful consideration to the stands and attitudes of university teachers concerning the use of GM technology in their online classes. Although it was limited to a small population sample, the present research could inspire other researchers to investigate the use of ICTs in Algerian schools and universities.

The findings of the present study revealed that participant teachers appreciate the use of GM and have positive perspectives about using ICTs. The analysis also showed that GM classes are not replacing the traditional face-to-face classroom instructions. Indeed, GM classes are supposed to foster teacher-students and students-students interaction, communication, and motivation in virtual courses. Stakeholders and decision-makers should know that purchasing the latest educational applications platforms is not the magic stick. The success of this initiative is

dependent on the positive outlooks and attitudes of teachers and students to accept the change and raise the challenge.

Suggestions

The teaching/ learning environment is more engaging and efficient, where both teachers and learners benefit from the facilities afforded by education technologies. This study puts forward some suggestions that can assure a successful implementation of Google Meet online classes in the language teaching and learning process:

- Supporting efficient technological schemes.
- Developing academic digital competencies of teachers and students to use GM.
- Handling the unpredicted changing situation of educational readiness during this pandemic.
- Providing adequate training programs.
- Adopting appropriate multimodal strategies to meet course material objectives for better learning outcomes.
- Assuring the stipulation of protected networking resources for an effective and efficient digital educational experience.
- Endorsing technology-enhanced learning for students to overcome the barriers encountered in the educational system during the COVID-19 pandemic, which is inevitable for permanent learning.

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