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**Bridging the Gap: Enhancing E-Learning through EFL and Instructional
Design Collaboration at Batna 2 University**

سد الفجوة: تعزيز التعلم الإلكتروني من خلال التعاون بين أساتذة اللغة الإنجليزية
والتصميم التعليمي في جامعة باتنة 2

Abdellah Behloul

Dr ,Department of English Language and Literature,

عبد الله بهلول

دكتور، قسم اللغة الانجليزية، جامعة باتنة 2

Abdellah.behloul@univ-batna2.dz

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Abstract:

The global higher education landscape is shifting towards online and blended learning methodologies, requiring significant adaptation from institutions, educators, and instructional designers. This study investigates the challenges faced by English as a Foreign Language (EFL) instructors at Batna 2 University, Algeria, during their transition to online learning using the Moodle platform. Despite their pedagogical expertise, many instructors encounter technical and strategic challenges in designing and delivering online courses.

Using a descriptive method, this research employed self-administered online questionnaires distributed to EFL instructors and students. Findings reveal a significant gap between current instructional practices and recognized best practices in online course design, with many instructors reporting limited online teaching experience and difficulties with Moodle's features. Furthermore, several instructors lack familiarity with instructional design models, which hampers their course development.

Students' feedback reflects dissatisfaction with online lectures, highlighting a desire for more interactive learning experiences. This study underscores the benefits of collaboration between EFL instructors and instructional designers to enhance course structure and online learning experiences. Integrating instructional design training into professional development could significantly improve the online teaching practices of EFL instructors.

Keywords: E-learning, Moodle platform, Online EFL instruction, Instructional design, Online courses.

المخلص:

يشهد التعليم العالي تحولاً نحو منهجيات التعليم عبر الإنترنت والتعليم المدمج، مما يتطلب تكيفاً كبيراً من المؤسسات التعليمية والمعلمين ومصممي التعليم. تستكشف هذه الدراسة التحديات التي يواجهها مدرسو اللغة الإنجليزية كلفة أجنبية في قسم اللغة الإنجليزية بجامعة باتنة 2 بالجزائر أثناء انتقالهم إلى التعلم عبر الإنترنت باستخدام منصة مودل. على الرغم من خبرتهم التربوية، يواجه العديد منهم صعوبات تقنية واستراتيجية في تصميم وتقديم دورات عبر الإنترنت. تتبنى الدراسة منهجاً وصفيًا باستخدام استبيانات تم توزيعها على مدرسي وطلاب اللغة الإنجليزية. تكشف النتائج عن فجوة بين الممارسات الحالية للمدرسين وأفضل الممارسات في تصميم التعليم عبر الإنترنت، مع إبلاغ المدرسين عن خبرة محدودة في التدريس عبر الإنترنت. يعبر الطلاب عن عدم رضاهم عن المحاضرات الحالية ورغبتهم في تجارب تعليمية أكثر تفاعلية.

تؤكد الدراسة على أهمية تعزيز التعاون بين مدرسي اللغة الإنجليزية ومصممي التعليم، مما يزود المعلمين بالمهارات اللازمة لتطوير استخدام منصة مودل، وبالتالي خلق تجارب تعليمية أكثر ديناميكية وفعالية. الكلمات المفتاحية: التعلم الإلكتروني، منصة مودل، التدريس عبر الإنترنت للغة الإنجليزية كلفة أجنبية، تصميم التعليم، الدورات التدريبية عبر الإنترنت.

1. INTRODUCTION

The contemporary landscape of higher education is undergoing a paradigm shift towards online and blended learning methodologies. Driven by technological advancements and pedagogical innovations, this transformation fundamentally reshapes how educational experiences are delivered and consumed (Picciano, 2022). While this shift presents numerous opportunities for increased flexibility, accessibility, and student engagement (Means et al., 2010), it also necessitates significant adaptation and innovation from educational institutions, educators, and instructional designers (Bates, 2019).

In the Algerian context, the adoption of online learning strategies faces a unique set of challenges and opportunities. Although the country has a growing higher education system, integrating technology into classrooms requires navigating infrastructure limitations, socioeconomic disparities, and cultural considerations specific to the region (Ghanem & Khelifi, 2018). Universities, including Batna 2 University, must adapt online learning methodologies to optimize the educational experience for their students while being sensitive to specific learning needs and styles.

This necessity is particularly evident for EFL instructors in the English Department of Batna 2 University. Despite their extensive pedagogical expertise and dedication, these educators encounter numerous challenges when designing full online courses and delivering them via the Moodle platform. These challenges include navigating the technical intricacies of Moodle and strategically incorporating diverse learning needs and objectives into their courses. Moreover, a gap may exist between the instructors' current practices and established online instructional design models and best practices. This skills disparity may hinder their ability to fully leverage the expertise of instructional designers, who are trained to create

engaging and pedagogically sound e-learning experiences.

This study explores the potential for transformative change within the English Department at Batna 2 University by fostering a collaborative environment between EFL instructors and instructional designers. The research focuses on the specific technical and strategic challenges faced by EFL instructors as they design and deliver online courses using the Moodle platform. By examining these challenges closely, the study aims to illuminate pathways for enhancing the online teaching practices of EFL instructors and improving the overall online learning environment for their students. It is anticipated that collaboration with instructional designers will provide EFL instructors with valuable insights into established best practices in online course design and pedagogy. Ultimately, this research seeks to explore how such collaboration can lead to the development of more engaging, pedagogically sound, and effective online courses.

2. Background of the Study

Fullan (2006) noted that when asked about change, individuals often use a mix of negative and positive terminologies, including fear, danger, anxiety, excitement, improvement, and energizing. He defined teacher development as the process of “developing new insights into pedagogy and their own practice, and exploring new or advanced understandings of content and resources” (p. 329). This definition positions development as a form of change.

With the rapid advancements in information and communication technology, the role of teachers is evolving, demanding that educators engage with students who are increasingly tech-savvy (Leu, Kinzer, Coiro, & Cammack, 2004). However, many educators fear this change, leading them to cling to traditional teaching methods (Peterson, 1999). Traditional teaching typically follows a top-down approach, where the teacher serves as the primary knowledge provider, adhering to a lesson

plan they have crafted. Consequently, some educators identify as digital immigrants, while their students are often viewed as digital natives (Prensky, 2001). This underscores the urgent need for digital development among teachers in developing countries such as Algeria and Libya (Labass & El Shaban, 2013). Despite a clear policy promoting digital education in Algeria, Guemide, Benchaiba, and Bouzar (2012) argue that systemic fragility keeps many teachers confined to traditional methodologies.

Prensky (2001) asserted that the fear surrounding the digital divide is not rooted in tools or students, but in teachers themselves. It's important to recognize that not all teachers are digital immigrants, nor are all students digital natives (Zur & Zur, 2011). The digital divide is a "humanware" issue, emphasizing that the barriers are more about human relationships with technology rather than technological shortcomings (Warschauer, 2003). Warschauer pointed out that developing countries often invest heavily in hardware without prioritizing teacher development. According to Prensky (2012), teachers must adapt, as students cannot revert to outdated methods; he states that "educators need to reconsider both their methodology and their content" (p. 71). To transition to a "Mindset 2," educators must communicate in ways their students understand, which requires a shift towards a more fluid, less sequential approach to teaching (Prensky, 2012). Additionally, they must consider curricula that encompass both legacy (traditional subjects like reading and math) and future (digital content) (Prensky, 2012).

Transitioning to Mindset 2 involves not merely digitizing old materials but engaging with new content (Lankshear & Knobel, 2011). While teachers may feel more comfortable with traditional resources, enthusiastic adopters can leverage their existing skills to innovate with the support of eager learners. This collaboration between students and teachers, as suggested by the New London Group (1996), can help

educators understand how digital students learn. When a digital curriculum is collaboratively designed by teachers and students, it can foster inclusivity across various learning styles.

Understanding the main areas of change is essential for educators. Scholars such as Bayne & Ross (2007), Knobel & Lankshear (2011), and Prensky (2001, 2012) emphasize the importance of recognizing digital students not only in terms of their thought processes but also in how they engage with learning.

Key Areas of Change:

- **Communicating:** Students favor e-mail, texting, and chat platforms, maintaining extensive networks on social media, which can enhance online discussions. Their communication often includes abbreviations and emoticons, compensating for the lack of face-to-face interaction.
- **Sharing:** Digital students leverage platforms like blogs and webcams, multitasking with devices in ways that differ from traditional phone usage.
- **Exchanging:** Students frequently engage in online exchanges of music, movies, and humor, particularly through peer-to-peer networks.
- **Creating:** Many students create personal websites and digital avatars with relative ease.
- **Gaming:** Digital students actively participate in online gaming, utilizing various platforms, including social media.

Additionally, Mami (2013) underscores the necessity of understanding the role of technology in developing learners and pedagogical practices. Without sufficient knowledge to effectively navigate new data, combined with a lack of involvement in reform processes, it becomes challenging to establish a structured approach to ICT use in English Language Teaching (ELT). The persistent reliance on traditional teaching patterns, coupled with

outdated syllabi, fails to address the needs of an evolving e-learning environment.

Houadjili & Mehiri (2015) found that ICT integration, particularly e-learning, is essential to adapt to the global higher education landscape. However, many Algerian universities continue to rely on traditional methods due to resistance to change, inadequately trained faculty, insufficient infrastructure, and the absence of clear strategies for e-learning implementation. Lassassi et al. (2020) highlight that inadequate teacher training in online education hampers success, noting a distinct lack of technological expertise and resources.

Students often encounter difficulties in online learning due to their previous experiences with traditional face-to-face classes (Guemide & Maouche, 2020; Lassoued, Alhendawi, & Bashitialshaa, 2020). As the emphasis remains on the professor in Algerian universities, there is a pressing need for educators to adjust their approaches and motivate students to engage in lessons actively (Kerras & Salhi, 2021).

In light of these challenges, this study aims to investigate the technical and strategic difficulties faced by English as a Foreign Language (EFL) instructors in the English Department at Batna 2 University within the online teaching context. Additionally, it explores the potential for collaboration with instructional designers to enhance the E-learning environment in the department.

3. Research Methodology Design

3.1 Statement of the Problem

The rapid rise in the adoption of online learning platforms, such as Moodle, at the English Department of Batna 2 University has surfaced significant technical and strategic challenges for English as a Foreign Language (EFL) instructors. While these educators possess extensive pedagogical expertise, a pilot study has revealed a substantial gap between their current online course design practices and the established

best practices in instructional design that are prevalent in higher education globally.

This gap manifests in two key areas. First, EFL instructors often encounter difficulties navigating the technical functionalities of the Moodle platform, which hampers their ability to create and deliver engaging and effective online courses. This technical barrier not only limits the usability of the platform but also affects the overall learning experience for students.

Second, these instructors may lack the strategic skills necessary to incorporate best practices in instructional design, such as accommodating diverse learning styles and needs and aligning course content with specific learning objectives. This deficiency can hinder their capacity to design comprehensive and successful online courses that effectively meet the requirements of EFL students. Consequently, the limitations in both technical proficiency and strategic instructional design may significantly reduce the effectiveness of the online learning experiences offered to students at Batna 2 University.

3.2 Research Questions

- What specific technical and strategic challenges do EFL instructors at Batna 2 University encounter while using the Moodle platform for online course delivery?
- To what extent do EFL instructors at the English Department of Batna 2 University incorporate various learning styles and learners' needs, alongside learning objectives, when designing their online courses?
- How essential is the collaboration between EFL instructors and instructional designers at the English Department of Batna 2 University for developing high-quality online lectures that enhance the E-learning environment? What specific outcomes can be expected from such collaboration?

- Which instructional design models utilized in higher education systems are most effective for enhancing the EFL online learning environment, based on criteria such as student performance and satisfaction?

3.3 Research Objectives

This study focuses on achieving the following four key objectives:

- **Investigate** the primary technical and strategic challenges faced by EFL instructors at Batna 2 University when using the Moodle platform to deliver their online courses.
- **Assess** the extent to which EFL instructors at the English Department of Batna 2 University integrate various learning styles and learners' needs with learning objectives when designing their online courses.
- **Examine** the effectiveness of collaboration between EFL instructors and instructional designers in developing high-quality online courses for the English Department at Batna 2 University.
- **Identify** the most promising instructional design models utilized in higher education systems to enhance the effectiveness of online EFL learning environments.

3.4 Research Hypothesis

The lack of technical and strategic skills in instructional design among EFL instructors may negatively impact the quality of the online learning environment in the English Department at Batna 2 University.

3.5 Choice of the Research Method

This study adopts a **descriptive research method** to investigate the challenges faced by EFL instructors and the potential benefits of collaboration with instructional designers in enhancing the online learning experience at the English Department of Batna 2 University. This method is particularly suitable for exploring and describing phenomena in their natural settings, allowing for the gathering of

detailed information about instructors' experiences and perspectives (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018). The descriptive research approach enables the collection of both qualitative and quantitative data, providing a comprehensive understanding of the current state of online course delivery and instructional design needs among EFL educators.

3.6 Population and Sampling Techniques

a. Population

The current study investigates the online learning experiences of two distinct populations in the English Department at Batna 2 University: EFL instructors and EFL students. The instructor population (N = 10) consists of individuals directly responsible for designing and delivering 100% online EFL courses using the Moodle platform. Understanding their perspectives and challenges is crucial, as it sheds light on the process of creating and sharing online courses and their need for instructional designers' support. The student population comprises all students in the English Department, offering valuable insights into their engagement with the online learning environment. By examining their perspectives on the current online EFL courses, this research aims to gain a holistic understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the online learning environment from both instructor and student viewpoints.

b. Sampling Techniques

This study employs two distinct sampling techniques tailored to the research objectives, ensuring a comprehensive understanding of the technical and strategic challenges faced by EFL instructors designing and delivering online courses via the Moodle platform, as well as capturing a representative voice from EFL students.

- **EFL Instructors:** Given that we specifically aimed to include all instructors (N = 10) who design and deliver 100% online courses using Moodle, no sampling technique was necessary in this case, as the entire

population of instructors was surveyed.

- **EFL Students:** For the EFL student participants, **convenience sampling** was employed. This technique was chosen to capture a broader student perspective on the online courses by including readily available students enrolled in the instructors' Moodle courses.

3.7 Data Gathering Tools

Data collection for this study involved the administration of two self-administered online questionnaires. The first questionnaire, targeted at EFL instructors, employed a mix of closed-ended and multiple-choice questions to capture their experiences with Moodle, the technical and strategic challenges they face, and the support they require, including collaboration with instructional designers. The second questionnaire, distributed to EFL students, utilized similar question formats to gather data on their perceptions of the current online learning environment. This approach facilitated the collection of standardized and quantifiable data from both instructors and students, enabling a comprehensive exploration of the research objectives.

3.8 Data Analysis Methods

The collected data will be analyzed using both quantitative and qualitative methods:

- **Quantitative Analysis:** Data from the closed-ended and multiple-choice questions will be statistically analyzed using descriptive statistics (mean, median, mode, and standard deviation) to summarize the instructors' and students' experiences and perceptions. This analysis will provide a clear overview of the common challenges and support needs identified by the respondents.
- **Qualitative Analysis:** Responses from any open-ended questions in the questionnaires will be subjected to thematic analysis. This will involve coding the data to identify recurring themes and patterns related to the

challenges faced by instructors and the benefits of collaboration with instructional designers. The findings will provide deeper insights into the subjective experiences of EFL instructors and students regarding the online learning environment.

By combining quantitative and qualitative data analysis, this study aims to present a comprehensive understanding of the challenges faced by EFL instructors and the potential benefits of collaboration with instructional designers, ultimately contributing to the enhancement of online learning experiences at Batna 2 University.

4. Summary and Discussion of the Findings and Results from Both Teachers' and Students' Questionnaires

4.1 Summary and Discussion of the Findings from Teachers' Questionnaire

The data gathered from the first and second sections of the Teachers' Questionnaire reveals that a significant portion of participating teachers (60%) have less than 3 semesters of experience with online teaching. This suggests that a majority of the instructors might be relatively new to the online learning environment, potentially accustomed to traditional offline teaching methods. This finding correlates with Chang and Kuo (2013), who emphasize the challenges faced by educators transitioning from face-to-face to online teaching. These findings highlight the potential need for targeted professional development programs to equip teachers with the necessary skills and strategies for effective online instruction. Such programs could involve collaboration with instructional designers and training on online pedagogy and course design, echoing Sharma and Issa's (2010) call for comprehensive training to improve teacher effectiveness in online environments.

Concerning teachers' comfort with the Moodle platform, the results indicate that only 30% reported feeling comfortable

navigating the interface and utilizing its features. Conversely, 70% expressed difficulties, suggesting that a significant number of teachers might require additional support. This aligns with the work of Bates (2019), who advocates for user-friendly interfaces and robust training programs to facilitate smoother transitions to online platforms. Workshops or training sessions focused on Moodle functionalities could be beneficial. Additionally, providing easily accessible user guides and tutorials within the platform itself could empower teachers to navigate Moodle independently, a strategy that resonates with recommendations from Mohamed and Alias (2017) for enhancing teacher support.

The frequent occurrence of technical challenges reported by 80% of teachers emphasizes the need for improved technical support. The results also indicate a significant gap between teachers' needs for Moodle support and their current experience, with only 10% feeling adequately trained. This underscores the insufficiency of current training and support mechanisms, as highlighted by Morris et al. (2017), who argue for enhanced training structures to ensure educators can effectively utilize technology.

The findings also emphasize the potential benefits of fostering closer collaboration between teachers, instructional designers, and e-learning experts. This collaboration aligns with Conrad and Openheimer (2015), who suggest that interdisciplinary teamwork can lead to improved course design and more effective teaching practices.

From the third section of the Teachers' Questionnaire, data reveals a lack of familiarity with instructional design models among a significant portion of teachers (60%). This indicates a missed opportunity for utilizing effective frameworks in course design, reinforcing the findings of Richards (2015), who notes that understanding instructional design models is crucial for effective pedagogy. Introducing a wider range of these models through professional development could equip instructors with

valuable strategies, thus improving online course design and delivery.

4.2 Summary and Discussion of the Findings and Results from Students' Questionnaire

The data gathered from the Students' Questionnaire reveals a concerning trend regarding student satisfaction with online lectures, with a significant portion expressing dissatisfaction (68% very dissatisfied and 12% unsure). This finding aligns with the literature highlighting the importance of student satisfaction in online learning (Wambura, 2014). The current format and delivery of online lectures may not be meeting student expectations, indicating a need for substantial improvements. Nearly 60% of students found the online lectures to cater somewhat to their learning styles; however, over 30% expressed dissatisfaction. The desire for more visuals (54.8%), sound effects (61.9%), and discussions (42.9%) underscores the necessity for a more inclusive approach, which supports Bates's (2019) argument for tailoring online courses to diverse learning preferences.

Students also highlighted areas for improvement in online lectures, including more visuals, sound effects, discussions, and improved technical functionalities. This aligns with Mohamed and Alias (2017), who advocate for an engaging and interactive online learning experience that considers varied student needs. A significant portion of students (54%) perceived the current online lectures as lacking interactivity, further emphasizing the importance of incorporating interactive elements, such as quick polls or quizzes, to foster participation. This aligns with the findings of Richards (2015), who emphasizes active learning as a vital component of effective online pedagogy.

While 92% of students expressed interest in additional resources to supplement the lectures, 80% reported learning more effectively in offline courses. This suggests that the current online lectures may not be as effective as desired, indicating

a need for a more holistic approach to online learning, including cooperation with instructional designers to enhance lecture quality.

4.3 Discussion of the Findings in Relation to the Relevant Literature

In relation to the existing literature, the findings of this study regarding technical challenges with Moodle align with Chang and Kuo (2013) and Sharma and Issa (2010), who emphasize the necessity for user-friendly interfaces and adequate training for instructors. Similarly, the limited integration of learning styles in course design resonates with Bates's (2019) advocacy for a learner-centered approach in online education. The identified need for collaboration between EFL instructors and instructional designers supports Conrad and Openheimer's (2015) findings advocating for interdisciplinary teamwork to enhance online course quality. While the study did not definitively identify a single "best" instructional design model, the popularity of the Constructivist Model aligns with its emphasis on active learning, which is supported by Wambura (2014) and Richards (2015). Overall, the findings of this study contribute to the existing body of knowledge by providing empirical evidence from the specific context of EFL online learning at the English department of Batna 2 University and by highlighting areas for further exploration and development.

5. Hypothesis Testing

The analysis of the findings strongly supports the initial hypothesis that a significant portion of teachers lacks experience and comfort with online teaching methods and the Moodle platform. Furthermore, many teachers are unfamiliar with instructional design models, highlighting a deficiency in technical and strategic skills in instructional design. This aligns with the students' data, which reveals dissatisfaction with online lectures and a desire for more engaging elements. Overall, the results obtained from the current paper support the hypothesis that inadequate technical and strategic skills in instructional

design may be impacting the quality of the EFL online learning environment.

6. Recommendations

a. Professional Development for Teachers

- **Targeted Training:** Implement professional development programs focused on online teaching strategies, specifically tailored to teachers with less than three semesters of experience. This training should cover effective online pedagogy, instructional design models, and the integration of technology into teaching.
- **Workshops on Moodle:** Conduct regular workshops to enhance teachers' comfort and competence with the Moodle platform. These workshops should focus on navigating the interface, utilizing various features, and troubleshooting common technical issues. Providing supplementary materials such as user guides and video tutorials can further support teachers.

b. Enhanced Technical Support

- **Dedicated Support Team:** Establish a dedicated technical support team for teachers and students to address Moodle-related challenges. This team should be easily accessible and able to provide timely assistance.
- **Feedback Mechanism:** Create a feedback system for teachers to report technical challenges and suggestions for improving Moodle's functionality. This could help the institution prioritize updates and enhancements based on user needs.

c. Collaboration with Instructional Designers

- **Interdisciplinary Teams:** Foster closer collaboration between EFL instructors and instructional designers to improve course design and delivery. This collaboration should focus on creating more engaging, interactive, and learner-centered online courses.
- **Co-creation of Courses:** Encourage teams of teachers and instructional

designers to co-create online courses, ensuring that diverse teaching methods and learning styles are addressed.

d. Incorporating Student Feedback

- **Regular Surveys:** Conduct regular surveys to gather student feedback on online lectures and course materials. This data should be analyzed and used to inform course design, ensuring that student needs and preferences are prioritized.
- **Pilot Programs:** Develop pilot programs to test new instructional strategies or technologies based on student feedback, allowing for iterative improvements before wider implementation.

e. Enhancing Interactivity in Online Lectures

- **Multimedia Elements:** Revise online lectures to include more visuals, sound effects, and interactive features such as clickable links, embedded quizzes, and discussion forums. These enhancements can cater to different learning styles and improve engagement.
- **Interactive Tools:** Integrate interactive tools like polls and breakout rooms to facilitate discussions and gauge understanding during online lectures, fostering a more interactive learning environment.

f. Exploration of Alternative Learning Management Systems (LMS)

- **Evaluation of LMS Options:** Investigate other Learning Management Systems that may better meet the needs of both teachers and students. A thorough evaluation should consider ease of use, feature sets, and technical support availability.
- **Trial Periods:** Implement trial periods for alternative LMS platforms, allowing teachers and students to provide feedback on their

usability and effectiveness in supporting online learning.

g. Continuous Improvement of Online Courses

- **Instructional Design Training:** Incorporate training on various instructional design models into ongoing professional development for teachers. Understanding these models can equip instructors with frameworks for planning and designing effective online courses.
- **Best Practices Sharing:** Create forums or platforms for teachers to share best practices and successful strategies for online instruction, fostering a community of learning and continuous improvement.

7. CONCLUSION

This study has explored the experiences and challenges faced by both teachers and students in the online English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learning environment at the English Department of Batna 2 University. The findings highlight significant gaps in teachers' experience and comfort with online teaching methods, particularly in utilizing the Moodle platform effectively. The data reveals that a substantial portion of teachers require additional training and support, particularly in instructional design models, to enhance their online teaching strategies. Conversely, student feedback indicates a pronounced dissatisfaction with the current format and delivery of online lectures. A significant majority of students expressed a desire for more engaging and interactive learning experiences that cater to diverse learning styles. This disconnect between the teaching methodologies employed and the expectations of students underscores the urgent need for a comprehensive approach to revamping online course design and delivery.

To bridge these gaps, this article has put forth several recommendations, including targeted professional development for teachers, enhanced technical support, and increased collaboration with instructional designers. By addressing these areas,

institutions can improve the quality of online education, fostering a more effective and engaging learning environment for students. Ultimately, this research contributes valuable insights into the integration of online teaching practices within EFL contexts and highlights the need for continuous improvement in response to the evolving landscape of education. By prioritizing the needs of both teachers and students, educational institutions can enhance the effectiveness of online learning, ensuring that it meets the demands of 21st-century education.

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