

**Telegram and the Teaching of French as a Foreign Language in a
Context of Health Crisis:
Adoption drivers of a non-official tool: Uses and
perceptions (University of Tlemcen, 2020–2022)**

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Abstract: In March 2020, Algerian universities had quite shakily to migrate to distance teaching, a form of remote assessment and remodeling their agencies as teachers in the case of FFL teachers who are unable to enable even a weak dialogue related learning pedagogically owing to uneven connectivity and institutional protocols that required considerable time for implementation. This case study discusses the way Telegram (both, in this specific meaning and although informally considered "pedagogical emergency plan") ensured classes of individual FFL triadic speech at the University of Tlemcen from 2020 to 2022 and what have been the conditions that made its choice rational and diffused. Employing a mixed-methods design that triangulated teacher survey with semi-structured interview, student questionnaire at all levels (L1-M2), and available course traces (messages, task instructions, shared resources) The study demonstrates that Telegram was most valued by users for mobile-accessibility and low interface overhead & fast delivery of content. Students said that the single-thread logic meant less cognitive load and confusion; teachers reported both times saving, plus a continued space for oral interaction as voice messages or live synchronous exchanges. Overall, the results support Telegram as a feasible low-the-barrier communications infrastructure maintaining high teaching presence and social presence in the institutional platform blind time. However, that educational value comes with caveats; strong network reliability and transparent pedagogical principles need to be secured first in order to ensure workload, privacy and assessment integrity.

Keywords: French as a foreign language; emergency remote teaching; Telegram; mobile learning; higher education; Algeria: digital divide.

1. Introduction

March 2020: Less of a pivot, but rather a break. Overnight, university classrooms across Algeria had been turned into pseudo-digital classroom where foreign languages teachers were forced to cope with protection devices and useful devices. Nevertheless, foreign language pedagogy learning through speaking, embedded in an interactive loop of corrective feedback and progressive structure is anything but peripheral to the choice of a digital platform for language teaching. Now, there were official routes: the university admin had advised institutional platforms, but many instructors found them slow, untested and not very practical for students on tenuous home connections. Unfortunately, the telegram was already installed on most smartphones. No delay to activation, no requirement to login through an institution and no high entrance cost. It quickly became the *de facto* mode through which most FFL teachers at Tlemcen University live on with their courses: posting lesson notes, responding to questions as they arose, recording short voice notes when video was one bridge too far to cross and otherwise mediating around the cognitive load of crisis-mode teaching. This paper offers an investigation of that experience, specifically with respect to research literature concerning Emergency Remote Teaching (ERT) (Hodges et al. A stopgap, reactive migration from face-to-face education distant in intent to an interposition of online education far removed as a form of intentional online instruction (Sahu, 2020; Bozkurt & Sharma, 2020). This paper narrows its field of research around three questions helps to define the scope of inquiry:(1) What role did Telegram play through FFL teaching during the period 2020-2022 in the case of Tlemcen University? Well before October in 2023, there was a perception about its usability and utility that we had to analyses: (2) how it scored on these

parameters in the assessment of students (L1–M2) and teachers? (3) What was the context for its adoption, and why might this lead to an especially steep decline in use since 2023?

2. Theoretical Framework and Related Literature

To position Telegram as an intervention within a broader theory framework requires three complementary areas of work: models for the quality of online learning, balance between synchronous and asynchronous interactions, and theories of technology use under constraints.

2.1. Online Language Learning: Presence, Interaction and Mediation

Ari S within/through the Community of Inquiry (CoI) framework created by Garrison et al. A Model of Online Learning. Community of Inquiry The meaningfulness of online education arises from the interactivity in three overlapping presences: teaching presence (the design and facilitation of learning activities), social presence (participants perceived as real people) cognitive presence 7; solidly-designed tasks and immediate feedback (teaching presence); and enough engagement that they can move out of the land of tagged comprehensible input into production/output (cognitive presence). These are also points made by Chapelle (2001), and Hampel and Stickler (2005) who highlight task design, input-output sequencing and feedback delivery as variable that act critically in technology-mediated language learning as opposed to nice-to-haves.

2.2. Synchronous vs. Asynchronous Communication

Because for some online instructors, there is an activity with in-built tension between the immediacy of synchronous communication and reflective depth in asynchronous alternatives. Hrastinski (2008) asserts that the synchronous exchange creates motivation and a rational basis for coming together to form groups, but it runs the risk of disenfranchising those students unable to communicate because they do not possess the means or access at crucial times; while asynchronous discourse honors stability with abundant opportunities for elaboration all-at-once ameliorated by speed. In this sense, the practical allure of Telegram is just in that it balances these two ways of working: live action and archival (easily revisit- able material) can come from one source everyone can stay on platform for both student- and teacher-facing experiences.

2.3. Adoption Must Happen under Constraints: Local Relevance, Perceived Ease of Use and Usefulness

Based on Davis (1989) Technology Acceptance Model (TAM), the other main intrinsic predictors implicating TC are perceived ease of use and perceived usefulness. Facilitating conditions, referring to infrastructure, support and resources accessible to users as well as social norms that are particularly salient in the digital divide context of an Algerian university will be also included: most importantly it follows the model proposed by (Venkatesh et al. 2003) which is a unified theory of acceptance and use of technology UTAUT. COVID-19 is the first global crisis experienced globally, and we remind here that international evidence re-confirms the digital divide remains a structural limit to fair distance learning (ITU, 2022; Teacher Task Force, 2020; UNESCO, 2035) and against this reference need our study findings to be interpreted.

2.4. Workshops and seminars on Telegram and messaging applications in language education

While acceptance of technology in general, an increasing body of empirical literature has focused on internal messages apps as language learning contexts. Zheng G, Wang Z, Xu Ahasan3 and Hashemifardnia (2022) What matters: the effect of online shopping experience on customer loyalty: the mediating role of online consumer behavior. (2023) demonstrate Telegram helps learners to engage, develop motivation and gain proficiency in EFL contexts and attribute this effect to the minimal entry cost, persistent micro-interactions and feedback cycles. But most of these studies documents are premeditated, rather than spontaneous, ad-hoc pedagogical integrations of Telegram. This case outlines even if from a more institutional North African angle how Telegram could act as informal infrastructure which grew organically rather than specially designed innovation, while having serious implications on the collective evaluation of its use.

3. Study Context: University of Tlemcen, Department of Spanish

The research is situated at Abou Bekr Belkaid University of Tlemcen (Algeria), Department of Spanish, where the FFL courses are provided for both levels of undergraduate and postgraduate (L1, L2, L3, M1 and M2). Instruction wavered from remote student learning to hybrid programs from 2020–22. Although there were concomitant institutional calls for university-led initiatives to use existing official platforms, it quickly became clear that a number of the teaching staff preferred to run their courses primarily through Telegram instead citing challenges working with existing institutional LMS architectures. The shift from 2023 onwards to in-person teaching and tighter monitoring of compliance with mandated Canvas guidelines came close to shutting down course delivery on Telegram, although the issue remained relevant contextually for courses such as transversal modules which had already established informal channels.

4. Methodology

In terms of data collection, we employed a mixed-methods case study design combining quantitative and qualitative inquiries to capture the depth and breadth of Telegram use during the time frame 2020–2022. There was also a looking back question in the note, post 2023 practices to enable comparisons for reflections.

4.1. Participants

The teacher sample included the 122 university lecturers (almost exhaustive of male and female teachers) with considerable differences in professional experience ranging from new appointees to experienced losses who had taught over 25 years. Survey Characteristics: 450 respondents from L1 to M2.

4.2. Instruments and Data Sources

Teacher data were garnered via survey which included both closed items (primary teaching tool used, strengths/weaknesses) and open-ended responses followed by additional optional semi-structured interviews lasting approximately 20 to 30 minutes.

5. Results

Table 1

Primary Tool Reported During Emergency Remote Teaching (2020–2022)
(N = 122)

Primary Tool	Count	Percentage
Telegram	65	53.3%
Institutional platforms (Moodle/Teams)	57	46.7%
Total	122	100%

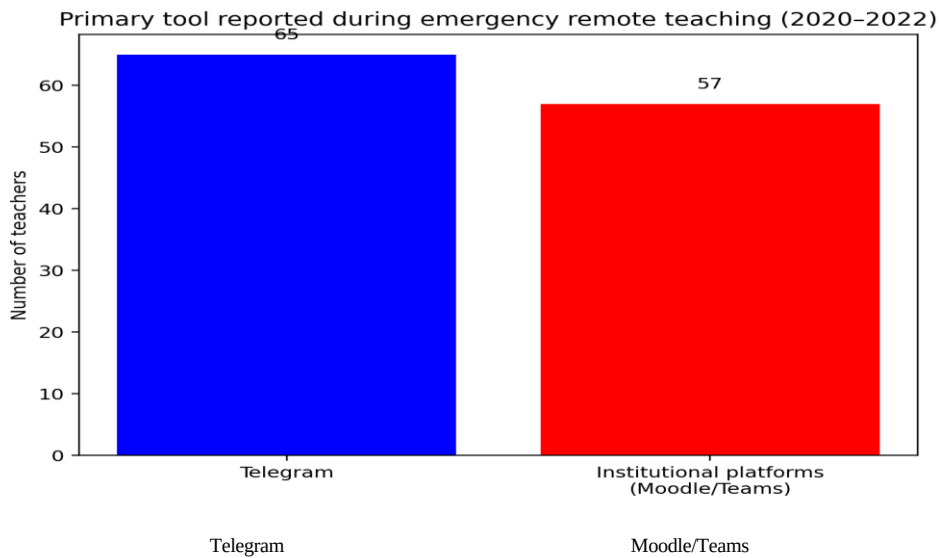
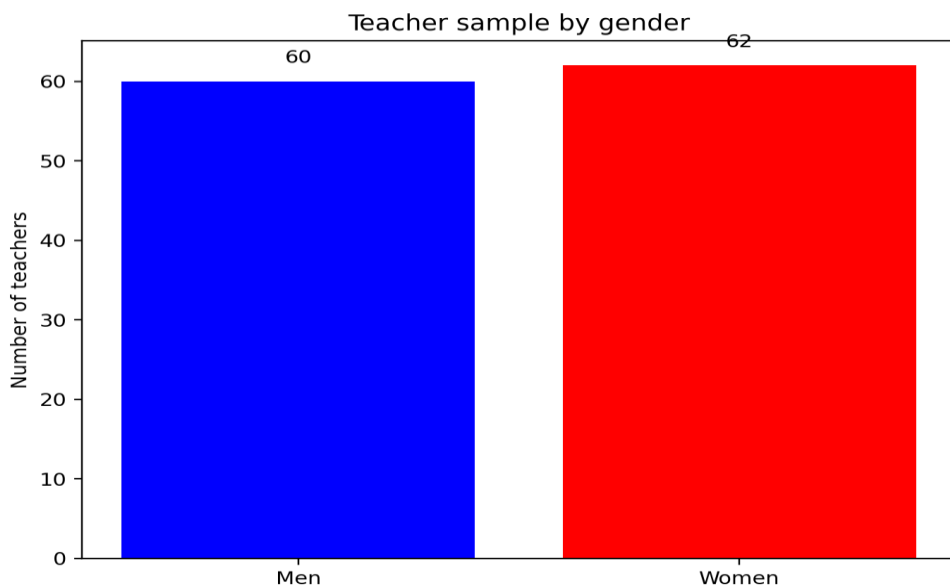


Figure 1. Primary tool reported during emergency remote teaching (2020–2022).

Slightly more than half of participants reported that Telegram was the main platform for their teaching during 2020–2022. This finding should not be seen as evidence of lack of interest in institutional platforms, but rather as a pragmatic reaction to the real-world problems associated with their implementation (delayed account creation, room for improvement around the expectations for systems like LMSs to comply with conventions that academics are less accustomed to) and to pressures experienced by students/lecturers alike from one week the following week running classes uninterrupted. Some participants reported that they used institutional platforms on an ad-hoc basis primarily to fulfil administrative requirements, while Telegram was the working channel for day-to-day operations.

Table 2*Teacher Sample by Gender (N = 122)*

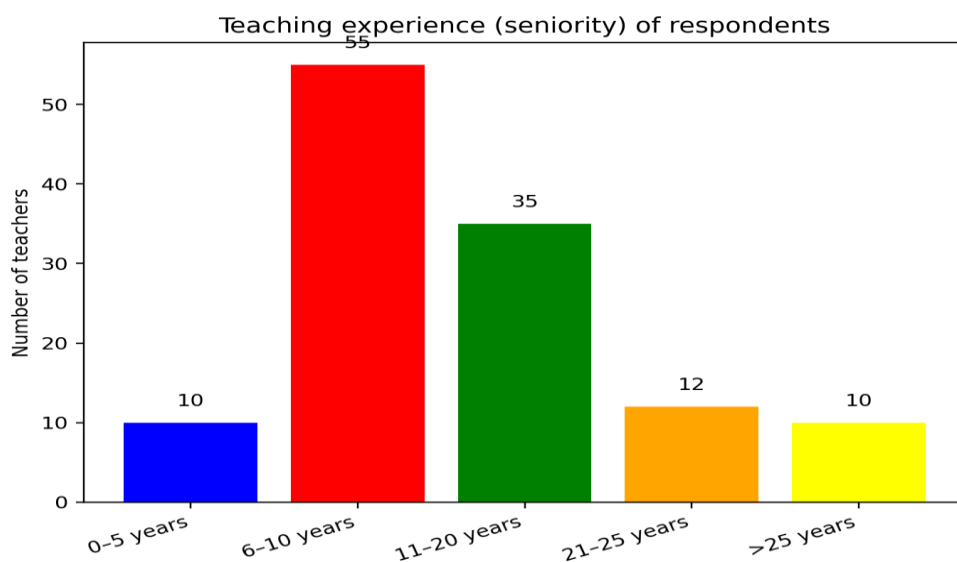
Gender	Count	Percentage
Men	60	49.2%
Women	62	50.8%
Total	122	100%

*Figure 2. Teacher sample by gender (N = 122).*

An almost equal split between the sexes in teacher sample is interesting for interpretational purposes Telegram does not to single demographic factor as explanation of its uptake so structural rather than individual explanations as guiding logic here.

Table 3*Teaching Experience (Seniority) of Teacher Respondents (N = 122)*

Teaching Experience	Count	Percentage
0–5 years	10	8.2%
6–10 years	55	45.1%
11–20 years	35	28.7%
21–25 years	12	9.8%
>25 years	10	8.2%
Total	122	100%

*Figure 3. Teaching experience (seniority) of respondents (N = 122).*

The distribution is notably high in the first 6–10 years, the next highest bracket being from 11 to 20 years. Also have some early-career and very experienced teachers, but fewer. The variability of these interviews produced a consistently uniform story: regardless of seniority, teachers narrated Telegram as a reliable mobile phone-based service that quickly used less bandwidth than alternatives based around video, and where 90 minutes of session could be maintained through short text explanations peppered with voice notes and notifications about tasks. In other words, people aren't

adopting Telegram by generation. For mid-career teachers, the imperative of time pressure and platform unreliability were the dominant drivers for their option, while those who had taught longer found it a natural regular extension of the existing habits they already performed on messages through phone; one that allowed them to retain pedagogical authority and (to some extent) clarity without having to learn a new conversational format.

Table 4

Students' Appraisal of Telegram for Learning (L1–M2) (N = 450)

Appraisal	Count	Percentage
Like Telegram	419	93.1%
Do not like Telegram	31	6.9%
Total	450	100%

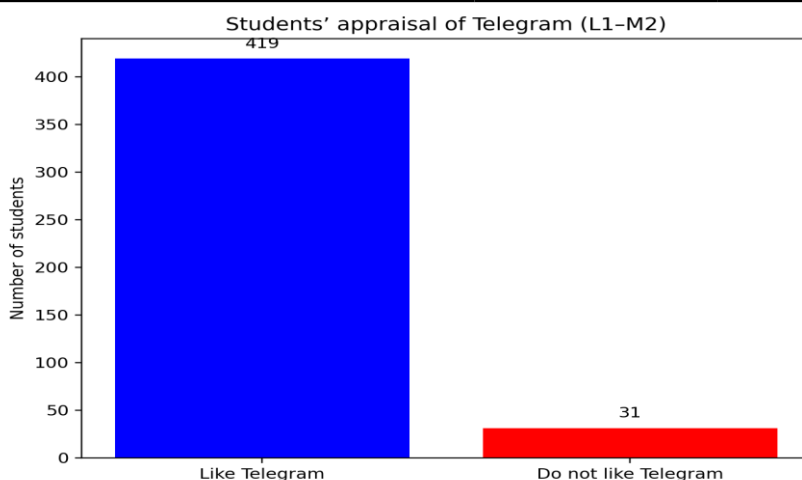


Figure 4. Students' appraisal of Telegram for learning (L1–M2) (N = 450).

Feedback from students on Telegram was mostly very positive. The ease of use was refined by most participants, with the ability to access everything associated with a course (e.g. lesson materials, reminders, explanations etc.) on one thread, receiving high praise. This kind of simplified things for them and made it easy for the students to take the course without combing through multiple tabs or platforms. Meanwhile, the rare share of student discontent was not at all related to Telegram. Rather they made reference to technical difficulties and in particular unstable internet connections which caused participation to some degree to prove nearly impossible. It is thus likely that even less complex and pedagogically sound external interventions still depend on high levels of contextual factors including connectivity (ITU,

2022; Teacher Task Force, 2020; UNESCO, 2025). These challenges were clearly factored into what the teachers observed, at least from their standpoint. A few of them told me they had modified their teaching by simplifying materials, sent compressed files or a shorter voice message. In practice, however, these modifications seemed essential to allow you students the ability to keep interacting with the course given their lack of access (or non-constant access) for a reliable Internet connection.

5.1. What students wanted: simplicity, the single thread and being there.

Students described Telegram at all levels as lower cognitive load. The single-threaded architecture of the platform worked like a communal notebook, as both their accounts state: material came in top-down one at a time, there was no burying things in nested menus, and you could scroll back through as many days of any class whenever you wanted. Apart from ergonomics, many students (and teachers) mentioned an emotional aspect of learning in a crisis a voice note from their teacher or some encouraging/exciting words in the group gave at least part of an interpersonal warmth that no other platform could match. This view is reflected by student responses across levels as they represent it with comments such as:

L1: Student L1: "I liked it more because everything was in the same window, so I did not have to search around in the other windows for something."

Student04865968: I NEVER "hated" Telegram, my home 4g sometimes goes kaput.

You can see the same issue in Moodle or Teams there I am lost.

STUDENT, L3 (EN): "The teacher can do the lesson, and a voice note might help because I could play it back so it's such as if you didn't go to the class live you can still learn."

Студент, M1: The presentations were simple to arrange in terms of organization, and the tutor quickly answered questions promptly through messenger.

M2 Student sentence: "It is necessary to specify in master classes what de facto needs to be done; for example, Telegram was well established because teachers pinned messages."

All these answers pointed to one, which is the very good take of Telegram in Mobile ergonomics and much less praise that made our approval indeed a lesser evaluation of the app as such. As long as connectivity was unreliable, this role could only go unfilled; however, once it surged and telegraphic immediacy met low-effort UI, the difference was real.

5.2. What They Valued: Less Contact, More Predictable, Manageable

The main virtue of Telegram for teachers was temporal: it handed a little substance back with the tempo of the five-day employed week. Most respondents characterized institutional-based platforms as featuring complex multi-step processes just to upload content or schedule activities; a lesson could be posted on Telegram in minutes, for example, with many of the posts literally downloaded directly from mobile phone use to promote immediacy. That difference seemed huge when every week not taught translated into lost instructional time. In emergency contexts, where you do not have the time to write lengthy corrections, it was also going to be useful for making voice feedback on messages instead of typing.

6. Discussion

The picture that emerges based on these data mirrors, to an astonishing extent, the idea of presence as a critical component for online learning promoted by Community of Inquiry framework (Garrison et al., 2000). Telegram fostered social presence with relatively warm, real-time communications between teachers and students; it bolstered teaching presence by allowing easy distribution of materials and near-instant feedback; and it partially supplied some cognitive presence through peer discussions at the micro-level around tasks. Adoption Path: predicted from the unsolicited information systems acceptance model based on demographics of contact pattern respondents (Davis, 1989; Venkatesh et al., 2003): ease of use and perceived usefulness were high whilst facilitating conditions availability of device and general Familiarity mins Automaticity mobile messaging practice acceptability in most cases. In addition, the informal character of governance in Telegram raised practical challenges that were no less pressing. Institutional oversight: No one could answer questions about where students' data is stored, how long it remains there and even whether or not a

course syllabus documents what is taught but not how that content will be assessed. This, by no means less than the reintroduction of face-to-face teaching, is responsible for much the steepest decrease in use since 2023. It was not that Telegram failed but merely that it was a response to the issues of the period whose function outgrew and obsolesced its novel *de facto* *raison d'être* in other scenarios as the given set of problems dissipated. The interesting thing, possibly the most revealing one, is what remains of the data: particularly in transversal courses, showing that teachers develop their own technology repertoires and have rationales for using each tool according to every context through a cost-benefit analysis.

7. A Pragmatic Articulation Model: Telegram as an Emergency Infrastructure

Based on these observations, a functional articulation was prepared for any theoretical application of Telegram in higher education. Generally, a significant difference is that Telegram serves as a communication tool and institutional LMS as an organized learning framework to manage course content, assignments, evaluations, and learning paths. There are some functions that, under this model, would work wonderfully for Telegram: dissemination of announcements and important news; quick exchange of questions and answers; mail guideline on the keys voice feedback from students; receive microtasks to be performed by students; recovery, in case of absence of synchronous sessions, course coordination (during technical hiccups). Formal assessment, grading and archiving are kept on the appropriate institutional platforms where feasible. The principle of connectivity means that every time you interact on Telegram, this interaction must have an educational purpose and if possible a response with a footprint that can be tracked be it a feedback message audio or a short comprehension check or task delivery.

8. Limitations and Future Directions

The generalisability of the results is limited, as the data are abstracted from a single-institution case study inherently exists. The data did not contain sufficiently fine institutional records to run further cross-tabulation analyses (e.g., whether voice note use was moderated by teaching seniority or student proficiency level). Longitudinal cohort tracking could be employed in future studies to see precisely which subset of Telegram practices (e.g., pinned-text exchange, voice notes or synchronous group discussion) most reliably benefit the development of a particular component of an L2 and under what infrastructural conditions these benefits might arise.

9. Conclusion

Telegram had a Tlemcen spot, from 2020 to 2022, as official platforms either could not crack it or did so too late. It was an approach between the reality of institutional processes, maintaining the weekly beat of teacher assignments; and for students it was something familiar that they can manage and at its best, a human interface interested in their overall being. When schools were turned upside down, it made sense those traits had real educational value, an idea borne out by the data and consistent with theoretical literature. That reliance must be seen with regard to the significance of Telegram. It flourished in a climate of urgency and waned once need diminished and layers of bureaucracy reemerged. The question relevant to future emergency planning (and platform designing both for remote learning but for remote communities as a whole) all past Tlemcen, is whether that it "offered lessons" in low-friction design, mobile-first access; the importance of communication in space building etc.

Research Integrity Statements

Data Privacy and ethics: All data were anonymised; no Personally Identifiable Information (PII) was collected or reported.

Informed Consent: All study participants were informed and briefed on the purpose of research, and participation in the study was voluntary.

Conflict of interests: None declared. Financial support: None.

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