



Teaching english to speakers of other languages online via ZOOM: Taking E-learning and teaching to the next level

Enseigner l'anglais en ligne à des locuteurs d'autres langues via ZOOM : faire passer l'apprentissage en ligne et l'enseignement à un niveau supérieur

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Abstract: This study sheds light on the perceptions and experiences of ESL and EFL teachers who use ZOOM to teach online. With the viral spread of different e-learning platforms, ZOOM has become a vital tool in both processes of interactive teaching and learning. This research deals with how ZOOM's various tools and characteristics like chat, screen sharing, breakout rooms, and videos, etc) have impacted the teaching methods and the learning process. By gaining insights into the teachers' perspectives, this study will provide some suggestions and new perspectives into better practices, and the importance of ZOOM in taking both the national and international e-learning to the next level. The results of the study will be of use and help to educators searching for the optimization of their use of ZOOM and other e-learning tools and/or applications in their classrooms.

Keywords: ZOOM, e-learning, teacher development, ESL, online education

Résumé: Cette étude met en lumière les perceptions et les expériences des enseignants d'anglais langue seconde (ESL) et d'anglais langue étrangère (EFL) qui utilisent ZOOM pour dispenser leurs cours en ligne. Avec la généralisation fulgurante de différentes plateformes d'apprentissage en ligne, ZOOM est devenu un outil indispensable tant pour l'enseignement que pour l'apprentissage interactifs. Cette recherche examine l'impact des divers outils et fonctionnalités de ZOOM (tels que le chat, le partage d'écran, les salles de travail et les vidéos, etc.) sur les méthodes d'enseignement et le processus d'apprentissage. En analysant le point de vue des enseignants, cette étude proposera des suggestions et de nouvelles perspectives sur les meilleures pratiques, ainsi que sur l'importance de ZOOM pour faire passer l'apprentissage en ligne, tant au niveau national qu'international, à un niveau supérieur. Les résultats de cette étude seront utiles aux enseignants qui cherchent à optimiser leur utilisation de ZOOM et d'autres outils et/ou applications d'apprentissage en ligne dans leurs classes.

Mots-clés: ZOOM, e-learning, développement professionnel des enseignants, anglais langue seconde (ESL), enseignement en ligne



There is a rapid change towards the use of ICT's (Internet, Computer, Technologies) and social media in education and the teaching of the English language is no exception. This use of the internet and technologies has impacted peoples' lives in so many ways and has also gone viral and popular especially among young learners and teachers. The increasing number of people using social media as a tool that facilitates communication between and among individuals and groups, provides several opportunities for social feedback and support the foundation of tangled social relations (Boyd, 2007), show how prominent and necessary are those tools to the people. Among these tools which not only eased peoples' lives but also are less time-consuming, less energy consuming and inevitable, we mention Facebook, Twitter, Teams and ZOOM, etc. However, there are many issues related to the effectiveness and engagement of learners when they study online. In addition, most learners and professionals prefer to study after "working hours", which can affect life-balance in a negative way. Virtual classes on ZOOM enable students, professionals and academicians to learn virtually from any place (country) which is a convenient effective means of technology that ameliorates learners' engagement and achievements while reducing the negative effects of the after-working hour's schedules for tutors. Even though ZOOM and other applications and ICT's have some negative effects, they are becoming more and more popular and widely used that they represent a pillar of our daily lives, especially in education. Nowadays, ZOOM is regarded as virtual tutorial-based social network which has started to be common and widely utilized (Church, 2013). Nevertheless, the use of various applications has also been considered as a positive process which has improved the quality of education and learning (Smit, 2012), increased students' performances (Cifuentes, 2011). Moreover, learners communicated among and between them not only for their studies but also their personal life (Doering, 2008). These tools are also used to increase their motivation (Plana et al., 2013). ZOOM, like other applications, is not only used to hold conferences but also to give lessons and teach online regardless of time and place. The importance of social media and ZOOM as a means of instruction have not only spread widely but also revolutionized world of learning and education (Zaidieh, 2012), and their impact on the process of learning and teaching is enhanced by the use of ICT's which is the purpose of our study and to investigate the different opinions of EFL and ESL teachers who use ZOOM to teach English. In line with this purpose, the researcher is looking for answers to the following questions: Is teaching via ZOOM effective? If it is so, to what extent? What are the various issues encountered by English teachers? What solutions do you suggest?

1. Method

In this part, there are explanations about the model of research, study group, data collection and analysis. A questionnaire was designed and distributed to international ESL teachers especially those who teach online on ZOOM. Of course, the researcher will use both the qualitative and quantitative approaches. Moreover, data will be from participants (EFL and ESL teachers) and then analyzed carefully to better deal with the issue at stake. The Qualitative Approach uses an inductive attitude in social studies which underlines descriptive data collection techniques in natural environments together with the views of the participants (Bogdan, 2006). Qualitative research collects, analyses, and interprets data based on what people do and speak. Qualitative research is a naturalistic, interpretive technique to understanding the meanings that individuals assign to events (actions, decisions, beliefs, values, etc.) in their social contexts (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005). According to Berg (2007), it encompasses meanings, concepts, definitions and qualities, metaphors, symbols,

and descriptions of objects. Qualitative research is subjective and involves many techniques of obtaining information, such as individual, in-depth interviews and focus group discussions.

This type of research is exploratory and open-ended. Qualitative research can reveal insights that quantitative data alone cannot. It is a method for investigating and comprehending the meanings that individuals or groups assign to social or human problems, as well as attitudes toward human behavior and the social environment. Qualitative research allows us to better understand our reality and why things are the way they are (Bryman, 1984). The purpose of qualitative research is to produce concepts that can help us comprehend social processes in natural contexts, while emphasizing the meanings, experiences, and perspectives of all participants. Examples of qualitative research include narrative research, phenomenology, grounded theory, ethnographies, and case studies. Qualitative research answer questions on: Why do people behave the way they do? How are opinions and attitudes formed? How are people affected by the events that go on around them? How and why have cultures developed? This type of research deals with social phenomena in qualitative terms, which means it uses methods which do not deal with numbers (King, Keohane and Verba, 1994: 4). In qualitative research, researchers collect and analyze information (Long and Godfrey, 2004) and they focus on concepts and themes rather than numbers and techniques to draw out data and perceptions and investigate the context related to social settings and culture (Long and Godfrey, 2004: 83). Hence, qualitative research seeks to understand particular cases in depth, but it is by no means a superficial investigation of many participants. It gives a clear interpretation of certain fields of specific area of investigation (a case); thus it is also called 'interpretative research' and even "case-oriented" one (Ragin, 1999 b: 1137). Quantitative social science research on the other hand, uses natural science principles mainly an empiricist and positivist method to interpret social phenomena (Bryman, 1984; Cormack, 1991; Erickson and Roth, 2006). This type of research employs surveys and questionnaires, and it is from the responses of participants that concepts can be clearly operationalized, in an objective way through the use of self-administered questionnaire, and via path analysis and regression methods, causality can be established (Bryman, 1984). Quantitative research seeks to find rules and principles that can help predict how the world functions (Dharamsi and Scott, 2009). It uses methods like questionnaires, surveys, and records analysis..., etc. to collect information (Ragin, 1999, a)

2. Study Group and Data Collection

The participants of the study were teachers of English from different countries worldwide (Africa, Europe and America), most of whom were female teachers. They were informed about the purpose of the study. Of course, the quantitative data of this research were collected by some direct as well as open-ended questions given to 30 teachers and academicians. The questions were straight to the point, concise and precise. The answers which the researcher expected were either by "ticking the correct answer" or which best describe their experiences, or by writing short paragraphs in which they give their viewpoints. The questionnaire was designed using Google Forms and sent via WhatsApp and/ or Facebook.

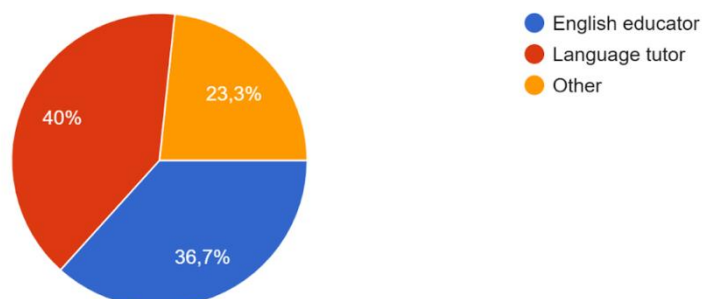
3. Data Analysis

In this section, data will be analyzed with rigorous scrutiny to better deal with the issue at stake. What can be inferred from the following pie chart is that 40 per cent of those teachers

were language tutors while 36.7 per cent were English educators. Still 23.3 were other teachers who obviously used ZOOM to teach online.

1. What is your role in TESOL online education

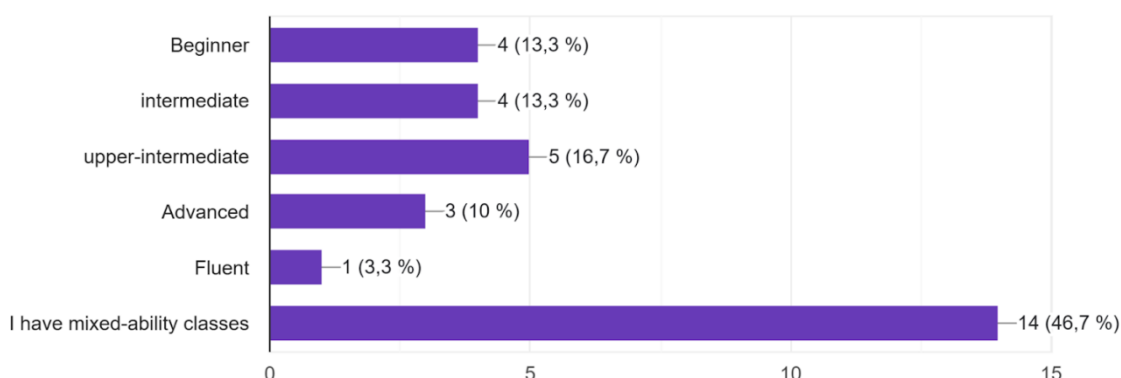
30 réponses



Among the teachers who answered the questionnaire, the highest percentage has been teaching English online for more than 5 years (33.3 per cent). 26.7 per cent of teachers have been teaching English via ZOOM for a year to three years while 23.3 per cent of educators have been teaching online for less than a year. Finally, only 16.7 per cent among 30 educators have been teaching online for a period of 3 to 05 years which means that ZOOM can be mastered easily. It is true that teachers need a minimum of experience and a short training, but they can learn more options as they start teaching and sometimes it is the learners who help their instructors master Zoom's options like sharing audio, sharing the screen and videos, etc. Many educators who answered the questions have mixed-ability virtual classes with a percentage of 46.7 per cent, followed by upper-intermediate (16.7 per cent) then 13.3 per cent for both teachers with groups of beginner and intermediate learners while only 1 to 3 educators have been teaching advanced and/or fluent. What can be deduced is that teaching online via ZOOM does not really require a good or excellent level of English to start learning online since even beginners or students with very low levels can also start learning virtually without problems.

3. What are the various levels of your students?

30 réponses

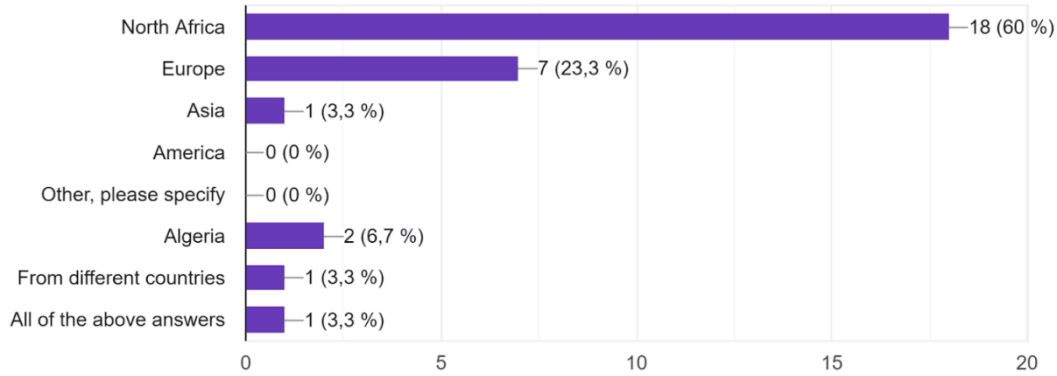


As the teachers who answered the questionnaires were from different countries, the same is true for their learners. From the bar graph, we can see that there are more and more learners from North Africa who try to learn English online via ZOOM especially from Algeria,

Morocco and Tunisia. Others either come from Europe 23.3 per cent or Asia 3.3 per cent. The rest of learners (very few students) are from America which clearly show that in this case, these learners of English are foreign students for whom English is either a second or a foreign language.

4. Which country or region are most of your students from?

30 réponses

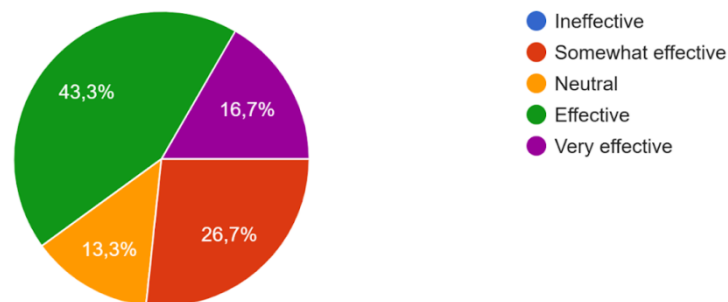


4. The Effectiveness of teaching and Learning English via ZOOM

Most teachers, among 30 teachers, nearly half of them believe that teaching via ZOOM is effective and those who think it is very effective and have a positive attitude towards ZOOM (16.7 percent), while 26.7 per cent believe that it is effective but to a certain extent while only 13.3 per cent preferred to remain neutral and did not say whether it was efficient or ineffective. It is not because the majority of participants (66 per cent) responded that ZOOM was effective or very effective that we are going to take it as an answer taken for granted but at least we can say that ZOOM is still widely used and that today there are online schools which totally functions relying on ZOOM and other platform which shows nothing but the effectiveness of this tool , which is like other ones such as Google Meet or Teams not without issues and problems which will be dealt with in due time.

Section 2: Zoom as a Teaching Tool 5. How would you rate the effectiveness of Zoom as a platform for online English teaching?

30 réponses



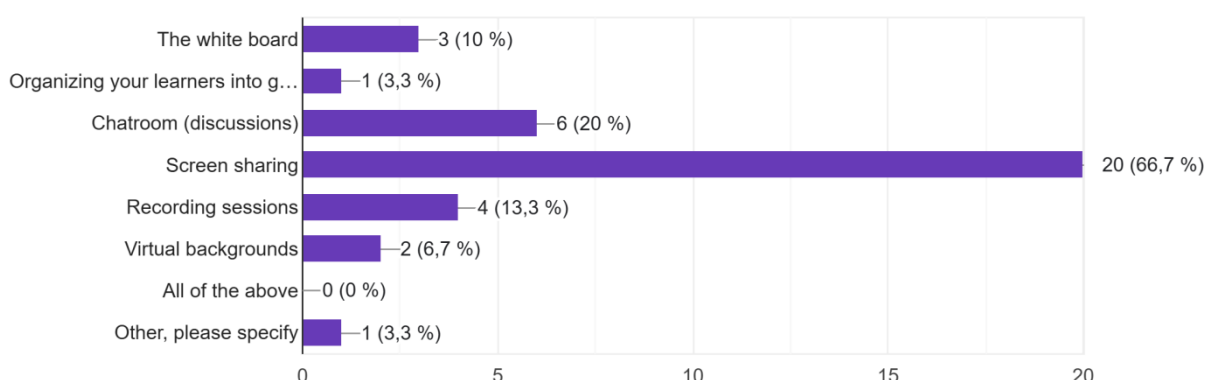
5. The Different functions/options by ESL/ EFL online teachers via ZOOM

Many teachers (66.7 per cent) use their screens to share books, videos or the white boards with their learners. Sharing the screen in virtual classes is the equivalent of other materials

like the blackboard and handouts in real life classrooms. Other teachers (6 out of 30) prefer to use chat rooms, while 2 of them think that using virtual background is an important function of ZOOM as learners will be less distracted. Still 4 teachers admit that most sessions are recorded and that this function is extremely important especially that educators cannot check cameras all the time and all together at the same time especially when the number of learners exceeds 10 in the same session. In case the teacher would like to report a problem to the administration or check if a point or a title was covered in the lecture, they can go back and check the recorded sessions. Some teachers also prefer to give activities and/ or tasks but allow their learners to respond in groups, since learners especially kids and teenagers enjoy working in groups. The teacher can thus allow their learners to work in workout rooms to facilitate tasks and make the learning atmosphere more enjoyable.

6. Which ZOOM functions/options do you usually use in your online lessons?

30 réponses



6. Various challenges faced by ESL/ EFL Teachers who deliver lectures online via ZOOM

Most teachers complain about some technological and pedagogical issues like connectivity problems and the burden of admitting learners many times as they disconnect and connect again. Besides, other educators suffer from learners' distractions, noise coming from students' families, time management and checking presence and absence every time. In addition, for those who use the free version of ZOOM, tutors are limited to 40 to 60 minutes, and they get disconnected automatically. Several tutors also said that sharing the white board is so slow, time consuming and it even leads to the lagging of the whole session. When it comes to language skills, English teachers assured that teaching writing and even speaking is much harder online than in classrooms. Besides, other educators said that Zoom quality is poorer compared to other tools like Google Meet. According to some teachers, the challenges are not related to ZOOM itself but to keeping one's learners motivated and capturing their attention all through the session. Their concentration cannot be maintained, and the teacher cannot check all their cameras all together at the same time. When it comes to participation, even though the option of 'raising one's hand' is available on ZOOM, some students sometimes tend to participate at the same time together without asking for permission which leads to chaos and disturbance for other students and even the teachers as well. For those who do not participate, they just hide behind active learners and remain passive.

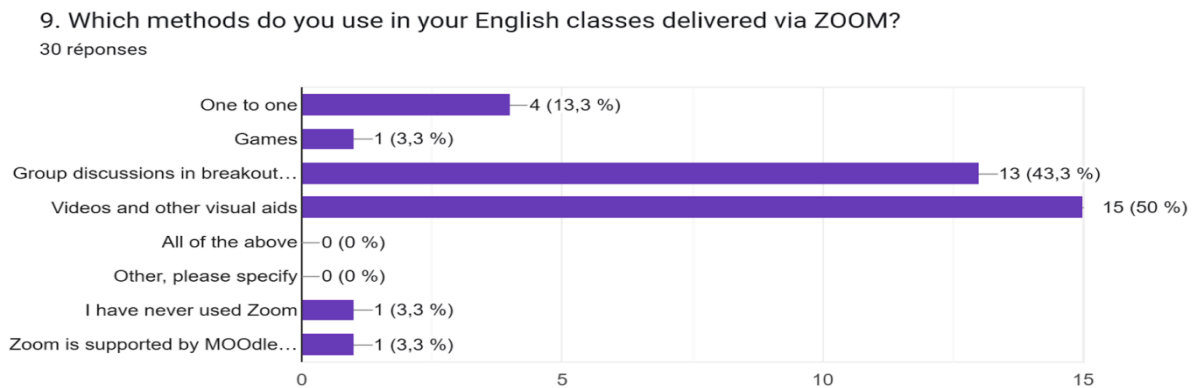
7. Online Versus Onsite English Classes

According to the responses of 30 teachers, most teachers said that they prefer onsite

teaching, i.e., real classes because they are more interactive. They believe that nothing is equal to face-to-face interaction, the physical presence of the teacher, rapport, debates and eye contact. However, some teachers confirmed that some students prefer online learning as opposed to others, so it is up to their different learning styles. Still, other teachers said that each has advantages and disadvantages. Direct education may be good for some students in terms of concentration, while indirect education saves energy, time, and effort. Those who advocate online education assure that it depends on how teachers use it. For example, if teachers go on "Quizizz", during their classes sharing their screens, they can make it much more interactive using quizzes, lessons and mind maps during online sessions. For those who teach online, it is an important opportunity to have students from all parts of the world. All in all, Zoom integrates with interactive tools like polls, breakout rooms, and screen sharing, allowing real-time collaboration and engagement. Those who advocate direct education prefer on-site teaching especially that it gives more opportunity for real-life participation and interaction. In classrooms, students can come to the front, stand, explain, and show understanding of the lesson. This motivates other students, makes them participate and contribute more to classroom discussions.

8. Methods used by ESL/ EFL online teachers via ZOOM

The teachers who answered the questionnaire declared that they used a variety of methods, as is clearly stated in the bar graph below. Half of them use videos and other visual aids (50 per cent), while 13 among the other 30 teachers use group discussions in breakout. While very few teachers use games (3.3 per cent) or prefer teaching only one learner (which is known as "the one to one")

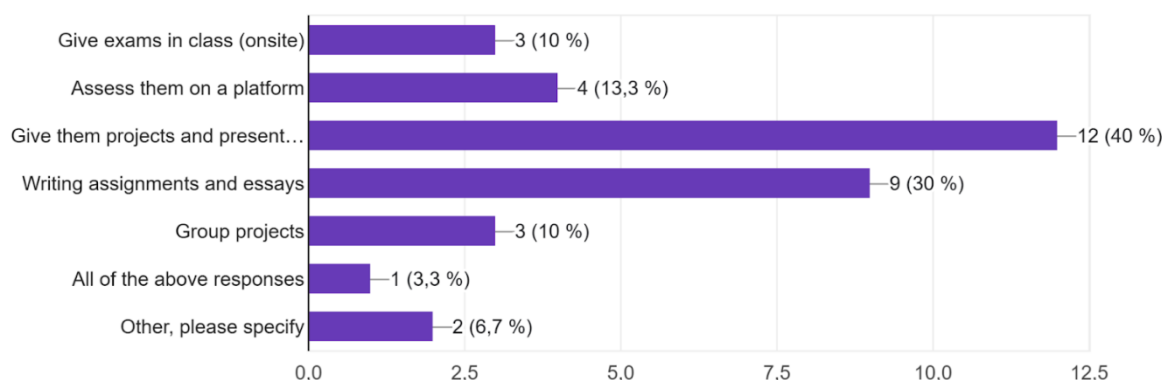


9. Online Assessment

Forty per cent of teachers said that teachers give their learners projects that they present online whereas 30 per cent of them prefer their students to write assignments and essays and hand them back to their teachers. Only 04 teachers among 30 confirmed that the evaluation is done on other platforms rather than ZOOM while there were 3 teachers who said that even though they teach online, assessment is done onsite in class. Even when learners take tests or exams on ZOOM, they are invigilated by activating their cameras and even sharing their screens so that the invigilators make sure they are not cheating and/or using research engines.

10. How do you evaluate the learners you teach on ZOOM?

30 réponses

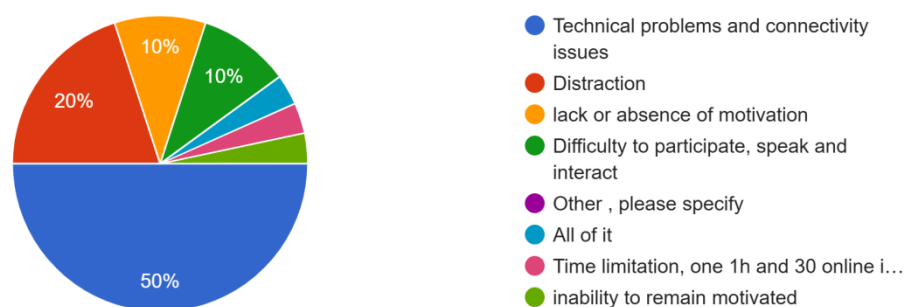


10. Issues and Improvements

It is true that teaching online could replace onsite teaching mainly during COVID 19 era and the lock down, and even after as long as people are able to study and/or work from the comfort of their houses without necessarily moving or commuting distances. However, as educators face difficulties learners always struggle, in the section that follows, issues faced by students will be highlighted:

Section 4: Issues and Improvements 11. What are the different issues that ESL/EFL learners face when they study via ZOOM

30 réponses



From the above pie chart, it is noticed that both teachers and students struggle with connectivity issues (50 per cent). Teachers also find it difficult when they ask their learners to read but they do not know where their classmate stopped, or they deactivate their cameras and get distracted or else surf on other websites. Other learners are not motivated and have no wish to interact or participate, especially since they can hide behind their screens.

11. Some tips/ advice to improve the quality of online English instruction

In the points of view of some teachers who teach English online using ZOOM, teachers need to receive training on technical tools at least for the basics, while other options will come with

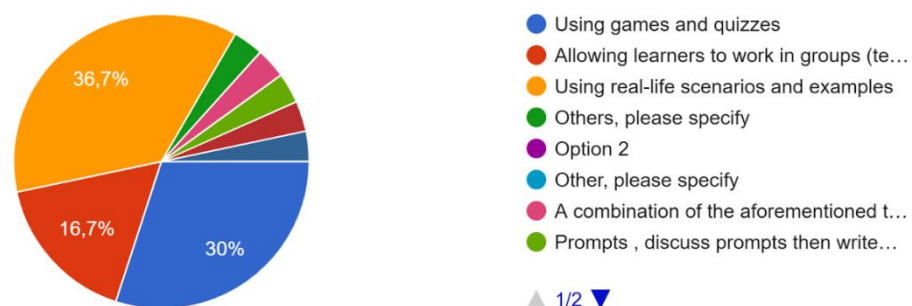
time since “practice is the greatest teacher of all times”. According to other teachers, to improve the quality of online English teaching, teachers should use PowerPoint presentations, write the most important points on a document and share the screen, asking questions from time to time to test students' mental presence. Additionally, because of connectivity issues and technical problems, lectures should be longer. So, if in normal classes, the lecture lasts for an hour, online lectures should last for 1 hour and half. Moreover, it is necessary and important for both learners and teachers to activate their cameras to be able to see one another as in normal onsite classes. This will certainly help educators get their messages across as well as reduce the time of learners' distraction. Finally, active participation must be encouraged through polls, breakout rooms, and discussion boards.

11.1. Various techniques used by online English teachers to keep their learners motivated

Some English teachers that it is not easy to keep learners motivated especially online, instructors must make efforts to capture their learners' attention and put an end to distraction. To do that, 36.7 % of teachers confirmed that they used real-life scenarios and examples whereas 30% of them said that they use games and quizzes. The other tutors (16.7 %) clearly stated that learners enjoy working in groups (for Zoom), the teacher uses workout room. It is a useful technique through which even slow learners can participate and become gradually active. Additionally, “two minds are better than one” and passive learners even learn from each other sometimes more than learning from their teachers.

13. What are the different techniques you use to keep your students engaged and motivated?

30 réponses



12. Advantages of teaching online via Zoom

During Covid 19 and the lockdown, governments and teachers turned toward online working and teaching. However, even in the post-Covid era, those online tools are not only considered as an option or a substitute, but also a very effective teaching tool. In the section that follows, many advantages will be listed. First and foremost, most teachers and learners agree that online teaching/learning enabled us to study/ teach from the comfort of one's house without moving or commuting long distances to work nearly daily. It is useful especially for those who live far or have engagements. Additionally, online lectures can be changed, and sessions can be replanned and hence Zoom and other online-teaching tools have proved their effectiveness, flexibility and convenience. Moreover, working or studying online is less energy consuming, less time consuming and even cheaper since that do not have to use

transportation, for e.g. many teachers also assured that teaching online is very interactive, fun and dynamic. Additionally, by teaching online, teachers can share lectures/ documents easily via Zoom and they can also integrate ICTs in their sessions. Finally, most teachers answered that not only can they teach from their homes, but they are able to teach anywhere, even when they travel or move, online jobs can be done without any issues. What is interesting about teaching online by Zoom is that it brings international students together in one session. Also, online tools give option for video call to see your students and so they can see you, making students feel connected to their teachers and to one another, leading to better understanding, interaction and increased student's performance and motivation. Zoom thus, like other applications, gives the option of recording the lesson so that students who missed it would be able to catch up and watch it.

13. Advice from experienced teachers to take online English education to the next level

Many of the English teachers who were questioned agreed that there is no magic recipe to be a successful English online instructor, yet they highly recommend the use of games and interactive activities to avoid the boredom of their learners. Moreover, learners learn how to work in groups, feel at ease to share their ideas with each other, without anxiety. Additionally, online sessions are successful if you manage them as online sessions not as onsite sessions. Some teachers have realized that their learners have become more active after using various features of Zoom. They usually give some projects for them to design and speak to the class; this pushes the students to build confidence in how they feel in front of the class and let them be the teacher especially when they are not paying attention.

14. Conclusion

To conclude, we can say that Zoom as an online videoconferencing and teaching instrument offers both teachers and learners the possibility to meet online via their phones or their personal computers and/ or laptops. Classes can be planned and even registered for future use. Zoom for English teaching has been considered as very effective and even lifesaving mainly during the pandemic and the lock down and nowadays, it is a very reliable and widely used especially that there are online schools everywhere around the world. Nevertheless, many teachers and learners prefer other online tools like Teams or Google Meet because they consider Zoom as a very slow tool. Apart from being effective, some Zoom users argue that there are many issues related to its use like connectivity problems, the lagging when sharing the screen, and sharing the learners' presence. Nevertheless, Zoom has been widely used by ESL and EFL teachers and can certainly take the level of English instruction to another level especially that learners can study any time (after the working hours for e. g) and from any location. Today, learners can choose their teachers and teachers can teach international students English as stated by teachers who took the questionnaire, many successful stories deal with learners who could better their level in English and forget about their fear of public speaking and interaction only when they started using Zoom.

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