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The Effect Of Distance Learning On Technological Skills By English Language Teachers At Nablus Primary Governmental Schools

أثر التعلم عن بعد في المهارات التكنولوجية لدى معلمي اللغة الإنجليزية في المدارس
الابتدائية الحكومية في نابلس

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Abstract

The study aimed at measuring the effect of distance learning on technological skills by English language teachers at Nablus primary governmental schools. It also determines the obstacles of technological skills during distance learning by English language teachers and suggests some appropriate solutions to these obstacles. To achieve the objectives of this study, the descriptive-analytical methodology was used. An online questionnaire was distributed to (231) teachers. The SPSS program was used to analyze the questionnaire data. The results showed a high degree of possessing technological skills by English language teachers during distance learning at Nablus primary governmental schools. According to the study results, the researchers recommended conducting further studies about technological skills during distance learning.

Keywords: Distance Learning, English Language, Technology, skills.

ملخص الدراسة

سعت هذه الدراسة إلى قياس أثر التعلم عن بعد في المهارات التكنولوجية لدى معلمي اللغة الإنجليزية في المدارس الحكومية الابتدائية في مدينة نابلس بفلسطين. كما حاولت تحديد معوقات المهارات التكنولوجية أثناء التعلم عن بعد لدى معلمي اللغة الإنجليزية اقتراح الحلول المناسبة لها. ولتحقيق أهداف هذه الدراسة تم استخدام المنهج الوصفي التحليلي. وتم توزيع استبانة إلكترونية على (231) معلماً ومعلمة. وتم استخدام برنامج SPSS لتحليل بيانات الاستبيان. وأظهرت النتائج وجود درجة عالية من المهارات التكنولوجية لدى معلمي اللغة الإنجليزية أثناء التعلم عن بعد في المدارس الحكومية الابتدائية في نابلس. وفي ضوء نتائج الدراسة أوصى الباحثون بإجراء المزيد من الدراسات حول المهارات التكنولوجية أثناء التعلم عن بعد.

الكلمات المفتاحية: التعلم عن بعد، اللغة الإنجليزية، التكنولوجيا، المهارات.

INTRODUCTION

The English language has become a universal language. The number of English users is constantly increasing nowadays. Also, it dominates all life fields; it is the language of medicine, the internet networks, technology, tourism, media, business, education, and science. Far and wide, the English language is one of the most used languages among people for different purposes. In addition, using the English language is a vital means of communicating with other people over the world. Therefore, teaching the English language is important. It plays a fundamental role in the comprehensive development of both the students and the community. It contributes to building a bright future for students in

which it provides them a wide range of opportunities for personal development and finding a job, for instance.

The methods of teaching the English language varied and developed over time. English teachers should carefully choose the suitable and appropriate method. Examples of teaching English language methods include the direct method, Audio-lingual, Total Physical Response, communicative language teaching, task-based language learning, Inquiry-based learning, etc. Nowadays, by integrating technology in the educational system, using information and communication technology (ICT) tools is vital in teaching English. ICT tools include interactive films and images, using YouTube, e-mail, and blogs. These tools promote the learning of English language skills and aspects (Alkamel & Chouthaiwale, 2018). Additionally, distance learning is a manner used rather than face-to-face learning. It aims at utilizing digital means to connect the teacher and students who are separated physically (Abuhassna & Yahaya, 2018).

Life all over the world has been turned upside down by Coronavirus disease. At the outset of 2020, COVID-19 was listed as a universal pandemic by the World Health Organization. As a result, the quarantine was obligatory completely. That pandemic has

influenced all aspects of life, including education. The education process was strongly affected because of closing most the educational institutions, including schools and universities. Hence, educational trends were directed to draw efficient plans and strategies to keep learning and teaching processes alive. So, distance learning as a way of education is a panacea to peruse learning in the time of the COVID-19 pandemic (WHO, 2020).

Distance learning is considered a famous way of learning to deliver information from different sites. It opens the doors for gifted or disabled students to learn. Also, it maintains the learning and teaching process going on regardless of any urgent situation. Employing distance learning system helps students to be involved, in touch with the material, and excited to learn. It expands using technology in different areas, especially in education, and following any useful updates. Students and teachers can improve their digital skills. It aims at promoting and fostering interaction and communication among many students from different places, with a focus on exchanging experiences and increasing knowledge (Shahini, 2021).

During the researchers` recent practice of teaching the English language during distance learning, she has noticed that teachers have encountered many obstacles; for instance, lack of

technological skills, lack of personal communication, internet connection instability, selecting the appropriate teaching methods, and dealing with the virtual platforms. The most prominent obstacle was employing technological skills. Besides, students lack face-to-face communication during the implementation of distance learning, which is physically separated them from each other and their teachers. That separation reduced their motivation and enthusiasm to keep on learning. Therefore, students' academic achievement levels were dropped. Above that, some students could not attend the virtual lessons because of many reasons, including the poor economic condition, affordability to gain electronic devices, or the accessibility to the internet network. Some students and their parents do not have sufficient knowledge or skills to handle this system. There were difficulties in conveying the required learning materials.

In addition, implementing distance learning has raised many new challenges; one of them is classroom management (Kamal, Zubanova, Isaeva, & Movchun, 2021). Besides, Sari & Nayır (2020) found that one of the most prominent obstacles is lack of training on virtual classrooms. Neither teachers nor students are qualified for implementing the distance learning system. Teachers

and students need to be involved in training courses and equipped with the required skills and knowledge. Training courses help teachers to effectively use technical tools, which influences students` learning. Thus, the researchers conducted a study to measure the effect of distance learning on technological skills by English language teachers at Nablus primary governmental schools.

Questions of the study:

- What is the effect of distance learning on technological skills by English language teachers at Nablus primary governmental schools?
- Are there differences of distance learning on technological skills at ($\alpha \leq 0.05$) by English language teachers at Nablus primary governmental schools due to the variables (Gender, Academic qualification)?

Hypothesis of the study:

This study attempts to test the following hypotheses:

There are no statistically significant differences at ($\alpha \leq 0.05$) of the effect of distance learning on technological skills by English language teachers at Nablus primary governmental schools due to (gender, academic qualification).

Theoretical framework:

Distance learning: “It is considered as a new type of learning to make learning process adaptable by using modern electronic resources. It is characterized by separation between the teacher and the learner, or between the learners themselves, or between the learners and the learning resources. This separation is either by the spatial dimension outside of the educational institution or by the temporal dimension of the learning time. That means it has the advantage of being available in terms of selection, time, place, selection, access proficiency and teaching supplies” (Shohel, 2014, p. 95).

Technological skills: are the knowledge and capabilities to perform specialized tasks. In education field technical skills requires specific education or training. It allows a person to complete designated task in reality not in theoretical way (Solanki, 2017, p.2)

Nature of distance learning:

The first definition for distance learning was made by Moore (1972, p. 76), “the family of instructional methods in which the teaching behaviors are executed apart from the learning behaviors including those that in a contiguous situation would be performed in the learner's presence so that communication between the learner and

the teacher must be facilitated by print, electronic, mechanical or other devices". It is characterized as a way of education where teacher and learner are physically separated from each other (Smaldino, Zvacek, & Simonson, 2019).

Mukhamadiev. & Yusupova (2020) defined distance learning as an effortless manner of learning in which students and teachers employ several useful technologies, intending to convey the knowledge and give students chances to be interactive and autonomous. Abuhassna & Yahaya (2018) considered distance learning as a manner used rather face to face learning. It aims at utilizing digital means to connect the teacher and students who are separated physically or by time.

Teachers and students can use various kinds of learning materials, including electronic media, references, and books. Distance learning system concentrates on an immense variety of technological devices, including online educational platforms and delivery approaches (Eugeniu, Mariana, & Svetlana, 2021).It also integrates technological devices, such as phones, tablets, television, internet, CD-ROM, apps, handouts-worksheets, and audio devices (Zafari, 2020).

Distance learning is a method to fulfill some students' and teachers` desire to break the usual learning routine and learn from a distance

.It equips teachers with ways to increase interaction during the online lesson, such as printed learning materials, making different types of conferencing like video or audio ones (Mukhamadieva. & Yusupova,2020). Likewise, it promotes gaining critical thinking skills and expanding knowledge. This method is flexible in that students can learn using a convenient pace wherever whenever they are. It has high quality in helping teachers organize exams, tasks, homework, and meetings remotely (Anora, 2020). Distance learning provides opportunities for students to be independent in doing the tasks and be responsible for their learning (Sibanda, 2021).

Learning resources, pedagogy, learner support, and management are worthwhile components of distance learning (Zapalska, Zelmanowitz, Jackson, Lamonica, Heckman, & Mrakovcich, 2020). To ensure purposeful distance learning, Bashitialshaaer et al. (2021) pointed the most fundamental element is teachers who are skillful, confident, compassionate, gifted, and genius in using media as well as being able to engage students in an interactive atmosphere.

Distances learning hand in hand with utilizing technology have proven their worth in effectively improving students' English

language skills considering their different learning styles. The cooperation between distance learning systems and technology provides flexible and interactive learning by giving teachers the opportunities to use various applications and platforms. Teachers can use multimedia lessons, online tasks, quizzes, online worksheets, flipped lessons, etc. That cooperation improves students` digital communication and creative thinking skills. Along with this, it helps them to develop reading and speaking skills by discussing realistic cases. Furthermore, it improves listening and speaking skills by showing them purposeful videos and giving comments (Hazaymeh, 2021). In addition, it`s a manner to enrich students with a wide and new set of English vocabulary and strengthen their understanding of their lessons (Cakrawati, 2017).

Types of technological skills:

- 1- Use of internet: The most important skill for teachers is having the ability to properly use the internet so that they can do many things, including searching information. As teachers are the source of knowledge, it`s necessary to have the ability to find and supply their students with accurate and valuable materials.

- 2- Use of Free resources and Sources: Searching on the internet enables both teachers and learners to find and use educational free resources and sources.
- 3- Social Media apps: Using social media can be not only for communication but also for educational purposes. When teachers integrate social media applications, they can both share authentic information and build meaningful relationships with learners and their parents.
- 4- YouTube: Using YouTube in creating or showing videos is considered as a practical and an effective way to provide learners with document information. It also inspires learners to learn and pay more attention. Teachers can use videos to explain a new topic, give extra information or review previous knowledge.
- 5- Preparing Presentation Software: Teachers can benefit from several distinct types of useful presentation software , including Prezi, screen casting apps , Keynote and Microsoft Office programs, etc. The previous ones can create modern and efficient education environment. When teachers implement them, they certainly show the knowledge in a better way and motivate learners to learn (Solanki, 2017).

Methodology:

The researchers used the quantitative methodology to examine the effect of distance learning on technological skills by English language teachers at Nablus primary governmental schools. This methodology determined the differences in terms of several statistical variables and identifies the technological skills by English language teachers. The tool of the study was the online questionnaire. The population of the study comprised male and female English language teachers for the upper primary level at Nablus governmental schools. The population consisted of (363) male and female English language teachers. The sample was selected randomly. The number of the sample members was (231) male and female English language teachers.

Procedures of the study:

The researchers developed the online questionnaire by reviewing and modifying the theoretical literature according to the suggestions of the specialists. The researchers verified the validity of the questionnaire and the accuracy of the measurement. It was also ascertained that the resolution was fixed by calculating the Cronbach Alpha constant factor (Cronbach Alpha) which was (0.70).

Statistical analysis: The researchers collected the data for the questionnaire, and then processed them statistically using a program Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS). Through applying (SPSS), the researchers found out the descriptive statistics (arithmetic mean, standard deviation, percentages, frequency, relative importance) and the means of the items of the questionnaire, and to determine the degree of each of them. Moreover, an independent sample T-test was used to test the first study hypothesis. One Way Anova was used to test the second study hypothesis.

The results:

First study question results: Table (1): The means and standard deviation of technological skills for English teachers during distance learning at Nablus primary governmental schools:

No.	Item	Mean	Std.	Degree
1	I divide students into groups to perform tasks in Microsoft teams.	3.37	0.95	Medium
2	I use other applications and programs in addition to Microsoft teams program.	3.78	0.79	High
3	I follow any new updated information about distance learning.	4.13	0.71	High

4	I am good at using Microsoft teams.	4.05	0.84	High
5	Students are told to use their real names with a real photo.	4.22	0.84	Very high
6	I can control students' sharing of photos.	3.88	0.87	High
7	Students are not allowed to turn on their cameras without permission.	4.17	0.91	High
8	Students are given the chance to speak using "raise your hand tool"	4.47	0.66	Very high
9	Students have the control on turning on and off their microphones by themselves.	3.08	1.14	Medium
10	I rarely expel students from the class.	3.87	0.91	High
11	I summarize the lesson at the end of the class and before I close the virtual class.	4.21	0.64	Very high
12	I record the lesson so as to help the students watch it more than once.	3.77	1.06	High
Total		3.91	0.34	High

Results related to the hypothesis:

Table (2): The arithmetic means, standard deviations, and t-tests for two independent samples, to examine the effect of distance learning

on technological skills by English language teachers of the upper primary level at Nablus primary governmental schools due to the gender variable.

Section	(N = 84) Male		(N =147) Female		T	Sig
	Mea n	Std. Deviatio n	Mea n	Std. Deviatio n		
Technologica l skills	3.87	0.38	3.93	0.32	0.7 4	0.4 7

It is noted from the previous table that the value of "T" was statistically insignificant at a level of significance less than (0.05) in the total score, as well as in the four sub-domains. There are no statistically significant differences at the significance level ($\alpha \leq 0.05$) in the degree of the effect of distance learning on technological skills by English language teachers of the upper primary level at Nablus governmental schools due to the gender variable. Thus, the researchers accepted the first hypothesis.

Results related to the hypothesis:

Table (3): The arithmetic averages and standard deviations of the effect of distance learning on technological skills by English

language teachers in the upper primary level at Nablus primary governmental schools due to the variable of academic qualification.

Section	B.A\B.S.C(N=183)		M.A\M.S.C(N=45)		Ph.D. and above(N=3)	
	Mea n	Std. Deviatio n	Mea n	Std. Deviatio n	Mea n	Std. Deviatio n
Technologic al skills	3.92	0.35	3.88	0.35	3.86	0.34

Theme		Sum of squares	df	Mean square	F value	Sig
Technological skills	Between groups	0.03	2	0.02	0.12	0.89
	within groups	8.83	227	0.12		
	Total	8.86	229			

The previous table showed that there are no statistically significant differences at the significance level ($\alpha = 0.05$) in the averages of the study sample study, the effect of distance learning on technological skills by English language teachers due to the educational qualification variable Thus, the researchers accepted the second hypothesis.

Discussion of the first question:

From table (3), the researchers extracted the high degree of possessing technological skills by English language teachers of the upper primary level at Nablus governmental schools. The arithmetic mean was (3.92) and the standard deviation was (0.35). The high degree is because most teachers have taken training courses and accessed the virtual platforms which strengthen their technological skills.

Discussion of results related to the second question of the study (according to the hypotheses of the study):

The results revealed that there are no statistically significant differences at the significance level ($\alpha \leq 0.05$) in the degree of the effect of distance learning on technological skills by English language teachers of the upper primary level at Nablus primary governmental schools due to the gender variable. The researchers believed that the result is logical, as both male and female English language teachers use the same virtual platform. Also, both received the same training courses and both have practiced distance learning recently.

The results indicated that there are no statistically significant differences at ($\alpha \leq 0.05$) in the effect of distance learning on

technological skills by English language teachers of the upper primary level at Nablus primary governmental schools due to the academic qualification variable. All teachers regardless of their academic qualifications have practiced the technological skills and taken training courses when they were at the university.

Recommendations:

The researchers suggested conducting further research focusing on enhancing teachers` technological skills, especially in English language. The researchers also suggested providing English teachers with a wide range collection of applications, programs, and new teaching techniques so that they strengthen their technological skills. Moreover, it is important to make interviews and organizing training courses for developing teachers` technological skills in using distance learning systems.

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