

Post pandemic Era: English Language Teachers' Perspectives on Using the *Madrasati* E-Learning Platform in Saudi Arabian Secondary and Intermediate Schools

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Abstract

Despite numerous studies on the sudden need to switch from conventional classroom-based education to e-learning during the COVID-19 pandemic, general agreement on the method's efficacy, advantages, disadvantages, challenges, and opportunities has not yet been reached. Investigating the perspectives of a wide range of teachers on this subject is therefore important. This study investigates the perspectives of English language teachers who use the *Madrasati* online teaching platform in secondary and intermediate schools. Its data was gathered via a questionnaire survey which was distributed to 24 male and female teachers. The findings showed that, while most teachers' initial response to online learning was negative, over time, their views became more positive. The teachers reported that the *Madrasati* platform built pupils' independence and provided major advantages to the educational system. It made marking homework faster and more efficient and facilitated communication with school administrators and pupils' parents and helped the personal development of teachers and pupils. The study found that the *Madrasati* platform provided opportunities for self-education, learner autonomy, and acquiring English outside the conventional face-to-face classrooms which can be built upon.

Keywords: Covid-19, English language teaching, Madrasati, Saudi Arabia, e-learning

1. Introduction

1.1 Conceptual Framework

The COVID-19 outbreak, which started in Wuhan, China in late 2019, swiftly spread to almost every corner of the globe and led many governments to implement a lockdown in March 2020. These lockdowns severely curtailed people's normal activities and, although many people were able to adapt to lockdowns by for example working from home during the pandemic, initially the question of how education could continue in schools remained unanswered. However, over time, many countries adopted online teaching as an alternative to face-to-face teaching as a way to address this problem.

Nevertheless, the suddenness of this unexpected transition to a very different way of teaching and learning, coupled with the lack of time to equip them with professional training on online teaching, meant that many teachers struggled to adapt to the new method (Teymori & Fardin, 2020). Pupils too experienced challenges in swiftly adapting to the new system (Tanveer et al., 2020).

As vaccines became available, many countries started to relax some of their earlier COVID-19 restrictions, allowing teachers and pupils to return to schools once more, albeit with some social distancing and protective measures. In response, researchers such as Alghamdi et al. (2021) began researching the educational scenario in the 'postpandemic' era.

However, in late November 2021, the pandemic took yet another turn when several cases of a new variant of the virus—the Omicron variant (Classification of Omicron, 2021)—were reported. The World Health Organisation (WHO) has expressed some concern about this new variant since it "has a large number of mutations, some of which are the cause for concern. Preliminary evidence suggests an increased risk of reinfection with this variant" (World

Health Organisation, 2021, para. 3). It may therefore be too early to talk about a post-COVID era because COVID may continue infecting people for a considerable time to come.

As Zhou et al. (2020) point out, online teaching has been fundamental to keeping the education system functioning without risking the health of teachers and pupils (Dhawan et al., 2020; Fauzi & Khusuma, 2020). Furthermore, even after COVID, Mishra et al. (2020) argue that online teaching will continue to exist and that going back to conventional teaching is not feasible. Previously, online teaching had been considered a substitute for conventional classrooms and face-to-face teaching; however, the COVID-19 pandemic shifted the status of online teaching, turning it into the new, conventional teaching method (Lockee, 2021). As a result, education systems around the world have found themselves setting goals for their teachers and pupils to adapt to online teaching swiftly and successfully (Liguori & Winkler, 2020).

Saudi Arabia was one of the quickest to adopt online teaching. It introduced the *Madrasati* (Arabic for ‘my school’) online platform as the official platform for general education whereby teachers and pupils continued the educational process. Each learner has an account; using this, they log in and gain access to the online materials and live classes. The platform was amongst the top downloaded online applications in Saudi Arabia in 2020 (Majdy, 2020). It served more than 6,000,000 pupils and 500,000 teachers, with an average of 250,000 online classes every day (Al-Thumairy, 2020).

The Online Learning Consortium (OLC), with the participation of other international bodies such as the International Society for Technology in Education (ISTE), the World Bank Group, the Association for Learning Technology, the US National Research Centre for Distance Education and Technological Advancements (DETA), the UNESCO Institute for Information Technology in Education (IITE), the European Distance and E-Learning Network, and the ICDE OER Advocacy Committee, conducted a study to examine the efficiency of the *Madrasati* platform during the pandemic. A total of 453,879 participants including pupils, teachers, parents, and university faculty members took part in the study to assess their satisfaction with the platform. The OCL study attempted to compare the *Madrasati* platform with those of 174 other countries. The results showed that the “Saudi platform outperformed its international peers, and proved to be one of the best responses taken to address the pandemic challenges, whereas more than 6 million users subscribed to *Madrasati* with a penetration rate amounting to 98%” (Unified National Platform, 2021, para. 3).

This article focuses on English language teachers’ current perspectives on the *Madrasati* online platform. As elementary school pupils were still studying online at the time of conducting this study, this article focuses on English language teachers at both the secondary and intermediate levels. It investigates the advantages and disadvantages of the *Madrasati* learning management system and the teachers’ overall experiences with it. It is important to note that the study does not aim to investigate logistical issues such as slow connectivity or the idea that teaching online is easier than commuting daily to school. Instead, the article focuses on the teachers’ perspectives regarding the teaching process itself.

1.2 Related Research

While a number of studies have investigated the global transition to teaching English using online platforms during the pandemic (e.g., Alves et al., 2021; Bailey & Lee, 2020; Hazaea et al., 2021; Kitishat et al., 2020; Shamsan et al., 2021), only a few have tackled the topic in Saudi Arabia despite the remarkable success which was a result of the

Kingdom’s rapid response to the challenges imposed by the Covid-19, as well the Kingdom’s contribution to providing innovative solutions to provide high-quality e-learning, and the continuation of the educational process despite the repercussions of the pandemic on the education sector. (Unified National Platform, 2021, para. 2)

Al-Ahdal and Alqasham (2020) did however survey a group of professors at the Saudi Electronic University and Qassim University. They discovered that the professors had moderate computer competency and used quizzes, forum posts and exit tasks for online assessment. When it came to challenges, they experienced difficulties in detecting cheating during online exams; they thought the learners’ performance was not as effective, and concluded that more organisation is required when conducting online teaching.

Similarly, Alolaywi (2021) studied 43 English language instructors at the Department of English at Qassim University and investigated the advantages and disadvantages of online teaching from their perspectives. The results show that the respondents preferred online teaching because they felt safer as regards contracting the virus, and so felt more emotionally stable. They also found an opportunity to improve their technical skills, and experiment with the online tools, teaching methods, and assessment. However, Alolaywi (2021) reported some disadvantages noted

by the respondents such as the inability to make an immediate transition to online teaching without prior preparation. She also argued that the pupils were struggling with this transition more than their teachers were.

Abduh (2021) surveyed 26 English language instructors at Najran University in Saudi Arabia. She investigated their perceptions of online learning, the assessment methods they used, the challenges they encountered, and whether there were any differences between male and female instructors' responses. She discovered that while the majority of the respondents showed moderate attitudes to online assessment, they also found using online platforms challenging. However, she found that the respondents' perceptions of online techniques were positive and that there were no clear gender differences in their responses.

To explore learners' perspectives towards the educational and social impacts of the transition to online teaching, Alghamdi et al. (2021) conducted a study with 20 postgraduate students in the Eastern Province of Saudi Arabia. Their analysis showed a positive side of online learning in four areas: the developing of educational strategies, testing the efficiency of the educational system, improving teaching and assessment, and providing a variety of educational resources. This study recommends that universities offer alternatives to students who do not have access to strong internet connections or devices such as laptops and argues that universities should offer "virtual labs, independent students' practical application, virtual student presentations with explanations of experiment notes, results, interpretation, and analyses" (Alghamdi et al., 2021, p. 495). The study further calls for "new training courses so that teachers can be supported and can deliver excellent lessons to their students" (Alghamdi et al., 2021, p. 495).

1.3 Significance of the Study

While in the main the studies noted above investigated both English language instructors' and students' perspectives on the positive and negative aspects of online learning in higher education, no study that tackles the problem from the perspectives of English language teachers in general education has been undertaken until now. Given that UNESCO ranked the *Madrasati* e-learning platform as one of the world's top four online platforms (Unified National Platform, 2021) and that an estimated 33,000 English language teachers in Saudi Arabia (Saudia TV, 2020) are using it, it is essential that their voices are heard and that their perspectives are considered as a priority when it comes to discussing English language teaching via online platforms.

2. Method and Materials

2.1 Research Model

This qualitative study developed a questionnaire survey to answer its four research questions which were:

1. How do English language teachers experience using the *Madrasati* online platform?
2. What advantages does the platform provide them with?
3. What disadvantages or shortcomings does the platform have?
4. To what extent are online platforms enabling the school administration to observe the learning process?

2.2 Participants

Twenty-four English language teachers participated in this study. The study sample included both males and females all of whom were teaching English at the intermediate and high school levels in the eastern part of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. The length of their teaching experience ranged from 5 to 15 years.

2.3 Data Collection Tools

An 11-item questionnaire was employed to gather the research data. It contained both close-ended and open-ended items. The closed-ended items offered a set of options that participants could choose from. Each closed-question was then followed by an open-ended subquestion which asked the respondents why they had selected their closed question answer.

2.4 Data Collection Process

Once formulated, the survey's questions were sent to three senior professors in the field of ELT and teaching with technology. Where necessary, the original questions were modified and amended in line with their suggestions. The link to the questionnaire, which was distributed via Google Forms, was then shared with the participants.

2.5 Data Analysis

Frequencies and percentages were calculated for the responses to the 11 closed-ended questions and presented graphically, while the participants' responses to the 11 open-ended subquestions were summarised. The following section discusses the responses to each of these questions in line with the study's research questions.

3. Results

This section presents the findings on each of the 11 closed questions and the responses to the accompanying open-ended questions. The results have been grouped to show how they address each of the study's research questions.

RQ1. How do English language teachers experience using the *Madrasati* online platform?

The data gathered from the responses to questions 1, 2, and 3 provided the answer to this question.

Question 1: Online teaching was more difficult than face-to-face teaching.

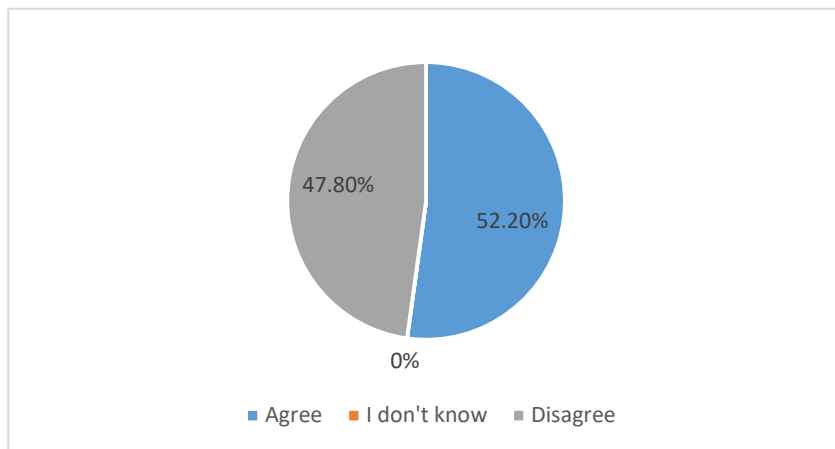


Figure 1. Virtual teaching Vs face-to face teaching.

As Figure 1 shows, over half of the respondents (52.2%) reported that online teaching is more complex than face-to-face teaching. However, 47.8% believed that online teaching is not difficult to perform and that it is in fact similar to the face-to-face mode.

Subquestion 1: What are the reasons behind your response?

Those who reported that online teaching was complex noted that:

1. Pupils failed to pay attention when their teacher was not in front of them.
2. While online education could not truly determine the pupils' level, they can be assessed artificially.
3. It is difficult to communicate audio visually with female pupils.

In contrast, those who thought online teaching was not difficult commented that some teaching was already being delivered through this technology before the pandemic struck. They offered the following observations:

1. Teaching another language requires visual communication to ascertain understanding the signs or dramatisation without the need for translation into their pupils' mother tongue.
2. Online education improved new skills for both pupils and teachers and also improved autonomous learning.
3. Although a learning language online is good, it places extra duties on the teacher.

Question 2: At the beginning online teaching was difficult, then it became easier with the passage of time.

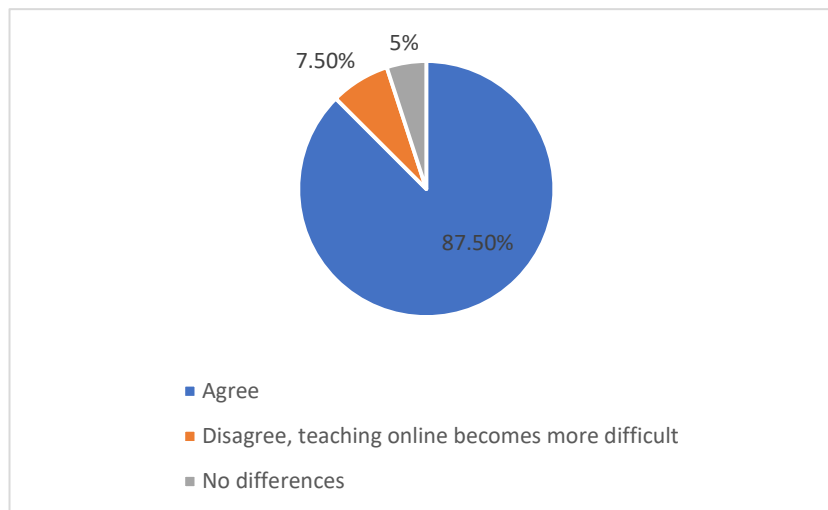


Figure 2. Comparison between online education before and now

Figure 2 shows that a majority of the respondents (87.50%) agreed that online education was difficult to perform at first, i.e., during the early period of the outbreak of COVID-19, yet with practice, it became easier.

Only 7.50% of the respondents believed that the complexity of performing online teaching reduced over a long period of practice. Finally, 5% of respondents reported no differences between their initial and later experience of teaching virtually.

Subquestion 2: What are the reasons behind your response?

The respondents' responses reflected three viewpoints. Those who reported positively that teaching virtually became easier with the passage of time justified their claims as follows:

1. We got accustomed to using the technology.
2. We learned new things and new interactive programs helped us to perform online teaching.
3. Every beginning has difficulties.
4. In my opinion, a person is able to acquire new skills if the right opportunities and appropriate training are provided.
5. Practice facilitates experiments.
6. There are many applications that facilitate online teaching.
7. Pupils get accustomed to the methods of online learning.

However, a few respondents stated that "after a while, I began to discover that female pupils were no longer caring about the lesson as much, as they are interested in chatting with their colleagues". Nevertheless, some took a more neutral position, stating that, "managing lesson time has become better, but not completely".

Question 3: If I get the opportunity to continue my postgraduate studies in English language, I would prefer to do it online.

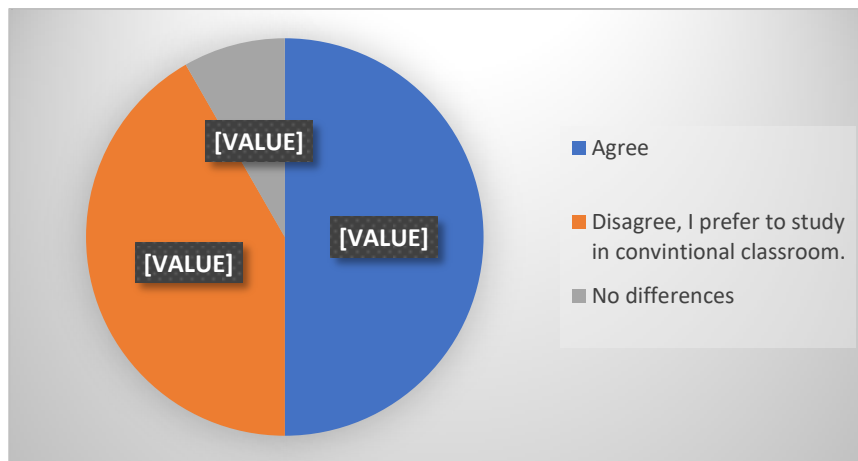


Figure 3. Teachers' tendency to continue their postgraduate study

Figure 3 shows that half of the respondents (50%) would prefer to continue their postgraduate studies virtually, whereas 41.7% favoured continuing their postgraduate studies conventionally. Finally, just 8.3% saw no difference between continuing their postgraduate studies virtually or conventionally.

Subquestion 3: What are the reasons behind your response ?

The respondents' reasons fell into two groups. Those who preferred to continue their postgraduate studies online offered the following justifications:

1. Depending on one's chosen specialisation, postgraduate studies usually taught in a different part of a university from where pupils are taught. Online learning can solve such a problem.
2. Studying while you are at home makes you relaxed both psychologically and emotionally.
3. It is easier especially for those who have experienced attending online courses.
4. To study online is easier and simpler than to teach.

Respondents who preferred to continue their postgraduate studies conventionally gave the following reasons:

1. Studying conventionally is more disciplined.
2. Commitment in conventional education is more serious.
3. Attending a conventional classroom is more beneficial.

RQ2. What advantages does the platform provide learners with?

The responses to questions 4, 5, and 6 answered this question.

Question 4: Learners' dependence on themselves for language acquisition has increased after experiencing online learning.

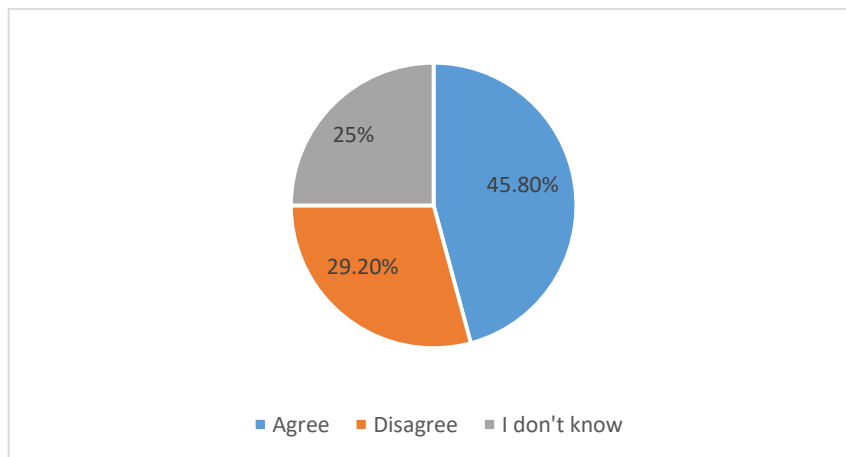


Figure 4. Learners' independence in online learning

Figure 4 shows that 45.8% of the respondents believed their pupils' dependence on themselves to acquire the language increased while studying virtually, while 25% disagreed with this statement. A further 25% reported that they could neither agree nor disagree that online or virtual learning increases learners' self-dependence.

Subquestion 4: What are the reasons behind your response?

Respondents who claimed that learners' independence increased through online education said:

1. Self-learning is very important in acquiring and practising language skills
2. Pupils' confidence and dependence on themselves increased through using technology to develop their learning.
3. Female pupils were curious to do their homework and duties, photocopying them and submitting them to their female teachers.
4. Pupils enjoyed collaboration in online tasks.

Those who claimed that online learning did not increase learners' independence in language acquisition stated:

1. Some pupils depend on their guardians.
2. Learning is a factor of individual choice. Many pupils may lose this desire because of the absence of the (teacher) who is the cornerstone in the learning process in conventional classrooms.
3. Most of the sessions are usually attended by pupils' guardians.

Question 5: Online classes enable pupils to do homework and exercises as if they were in school.

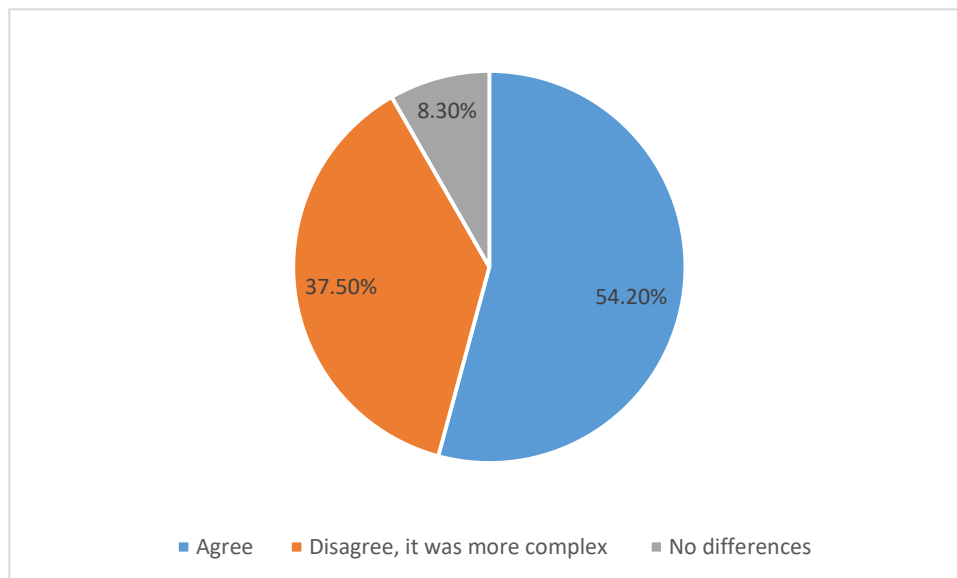


Figure 5. Online classes enable pupils to do homework and exercises

As Figure 5 indicates, over half of the respondents (54.2%) agreed that online education enables pupils to do their homework or exercises as if they are studying in conventional classrooms. About one third (37.5%) said pupils found doing the homework or the exercises required for online education was more complex. Finally, just 8.3% of the respondents believed there are no differences between doing the tasks required for online and conventional education.

Subquestion 5: What are the reasons behind your response?

Respondents supported their responses in three ways. Those who believed that doing homework on the online platform is easier said:

1. Doing exercises and homework on the platform is easy and fast.
2. It is even easier because there is an automatic correction.
3. Exercises are available on the platform.

Respondents who took the opposite position gave the following reasons:

1. Doing school homework, especially that done in the female pupils' notebooks, needs continuous follow-up to improve their writing, and it was complicated to some extent.
2. Not everyone was keen to do the homework.
3. A successful teacher is the one who can manage and follow up on his/her pupils with high efficiency, because there is also an extra set of duties in the platform.

Those who believed that there was no difference between doing homework in online or in conventional education said:

1. If it is in terms of grammar or vocabulary exercises, the result is the same in online or traditional classrooms, yet the transparency factor remains important in knowing who did the homework: the pupil or the mother or someone else is helping her/him!

Question 6: After experiencing online learning, I became more satisfied that learners' dependence on themselves is a more fundamental principle for language learning than depending on the teacher.

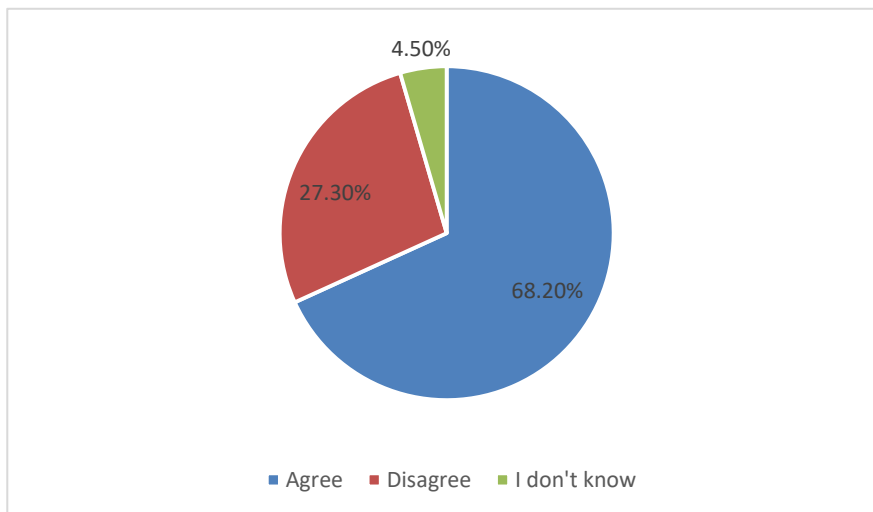


Figure 6. Respondents' belief on learners' self-dependency

Figure 6 provides the respondents' beliefs on learners' self-dependence. A majority (68.2%) agreed that pupils' dependence on themselves is a key principle for acquiring the language. Nonetheless, 27.3% disagreed. They thought that pupils depend on their teachers to help them to acquire the English language. Finally, just 4.5% reported that they do not know whether pupils' dependence on themselves or on their teachers helped them to acquire the English language.

Subquestion 6: What are the reasons behind your response?

The respondents justified their choices in three ways. Those who claimed that online learning increases pupils' independent ability to acquire the language reported said:

1. Learning English happens at first due to self-dependence.
2. The careful pupil is self-reliant.
3. In the past, some pupils depended on some social media or applications, but not a majority of them are able to learn online.

Some respondents gave the following reasons for the importance of the teacher in helping pupils to learn the English language:

1. Without a teacher, the pupils could not organise themselves and did not know where to begin. A teacher is the first guide because she/he is the cornerstone of the learning process.
2. As long as a pupil needs the teacher in foreign language learning, depending on him/herself may either make the pupil commit major mistakes, or it may lead him/her to lose interest in learning.

The third justification was that pupils may depend on themselves, but not in all school courses.

RQ3. What disadvantages or shortcomings does the platform have?

Question 6: Among the most serious difficulties that you faced during online teaching were...

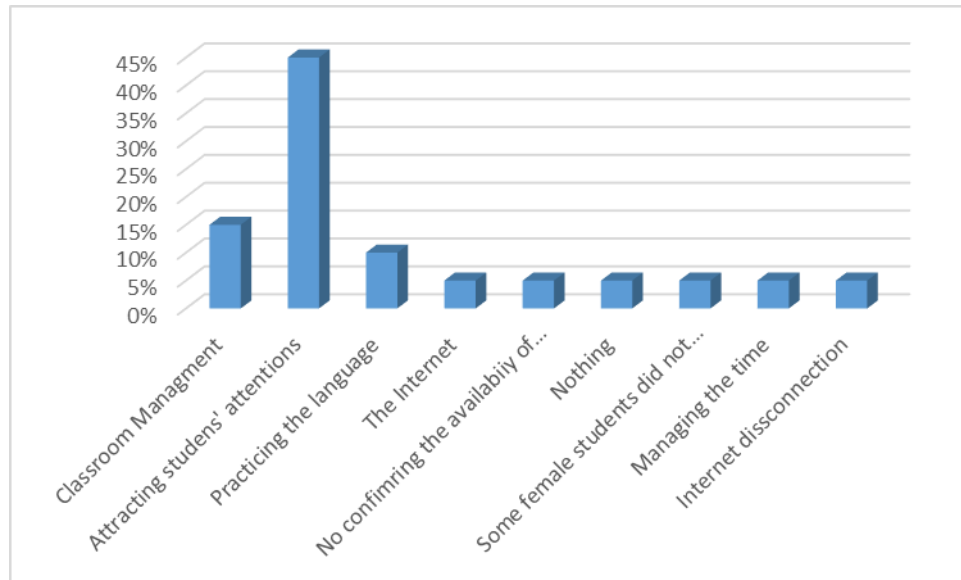


Figure 7. The difficulties during online teaching

Figure 7 shows the 45% of the respondents found the most difficult aspect of online teaching is keeping the pupils' attention. Fewer than 15% of the teachers found it difficult to manage the online classroom. Almost 10% reported difficulty in getting pupils to practise the language. Finally, a small number had internet-related problems, issues with contacting female pupils, and managing time on the online platform.

Question 8: Teaching English online is more difficult than teaching other school subjects.

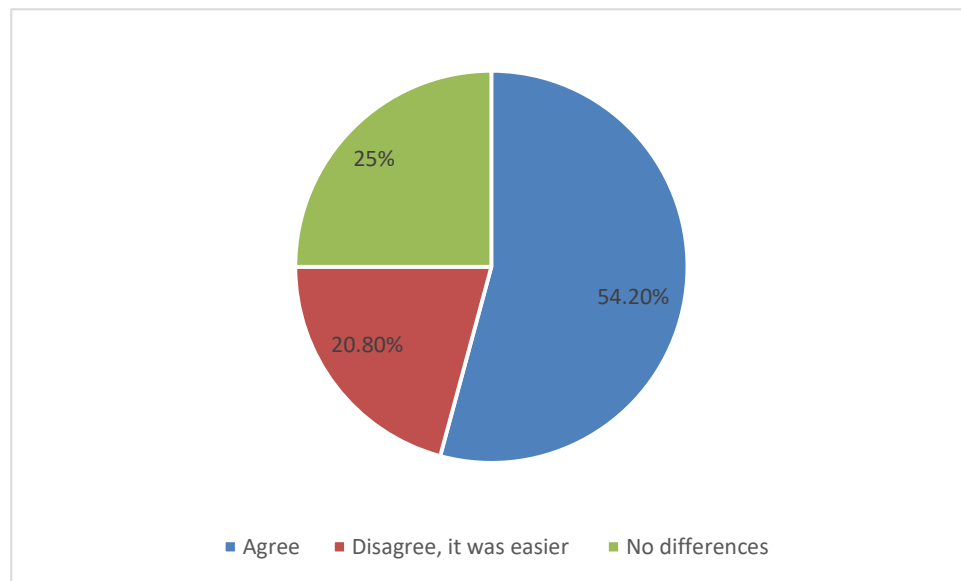


Figure 8. Teaching English online vs teaching other school subjects

The respondents' attitudes regarding the difficulty of teaching English compared to other school subjects are provided in Figure 8. It can be seen that 54.2% of respondents viewed teaching the English language course online as more complex than teaching other school subjects. In contrast, 25% believed that there are no differences between teaching English or any other school subjects online, i.e., the difficulty is the same. Finally, 20.8% disagreed that teaching the English language course online is complex. They believed it is easier to teach an English course online than to teach

other school subjects.

Subquestion 8: What are the reasons behind your response?

First, those who saw teaching English online as more complex than teaching any other school subject gave the following reasons:

1. Pupils could not see how to write the English alphabet.
2. English needs a representation of the body for the pupil to see and understand because teaching English requires the use of many methods such as facial expressions and moving hands for similes and descriptions.
3. If the pupil does not understand the meaning, there are no alternatives to convey the information.
1. The audio-visual component for the pupil in the real classroom is much greater than in the virtual classroom.
2. Since it is not their mother tongue, the pupil naturally has difficulty with pronunciation or syntax. What makes it difficult is that pupils' concentration in the conventional classroom is better than their concentration in virtual classrooms.

Respondents who believed that teaching English language online is easier commented:

1. It was very interesting and the pupils were waiting with great anticipation for the English class, but the sad thing is the small number of English language periods, as the two classes a week are not enough to support the educational loss.
2. The use of interactive games and media makes our [teachers'] job easier.

RQ4. To what extent are online platforms enabling the school administration to observe the learning process?

The responses given to the questionnaire's final three questions helped to answer this question.

Question 9: Dealing with pupils' guardians was more difficult during online learning.

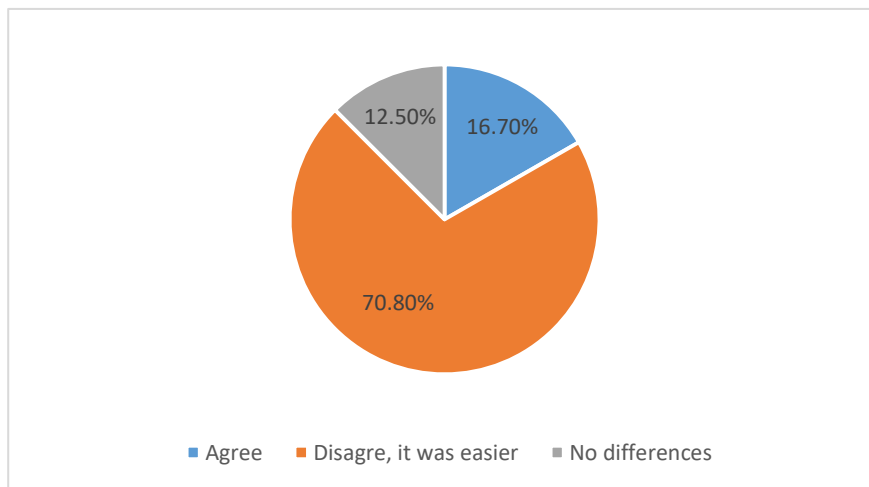


Figure 9. Dealing with pupils' guardians during online learning

As Figure 9 indicates, a majority (70.8) believed that it was easier to deal with pupils' guardians during online education, while only 16.7% thought that it was difficult to communicate with pupils' parents during online learning. Finally, the remaining 12.5% said they saw no differences in dealing with pupils' parents in online and in conventional education.

Subquestion 8: What are the reasons behind your response?

Respondents who believed that dealing with pupils' guardians during online learning was simpler said:

1. The pupil's guardian has got a clear vision of the teacher's way of teaching and following up on pupils.
2. Dealing with a pupil's parents has become more personal and better than in conventional teaching.

3. Communication was easy using the phone and email because guardians are available with their pupils and there are WhatsApp groups.

4. Parents are behind the devices with the pupils, and using WhatsApp to communicate was very easy.

Respondents with a neutral attitude believed:

1. The uncooperative pupil's guardian is the same in physical or in online learning.

2. Parents differ in their response to the teacher's complaint.

Respondents who reported that it is not easy to deal with a pupil's guardians in online education think that it is easy to deal with them in face-to-face communication in conventional education, "because they [guardians] come with their children".

Question 10: The school administration's follow-up process for the online educational process and teachers' performance was smooth and easy.

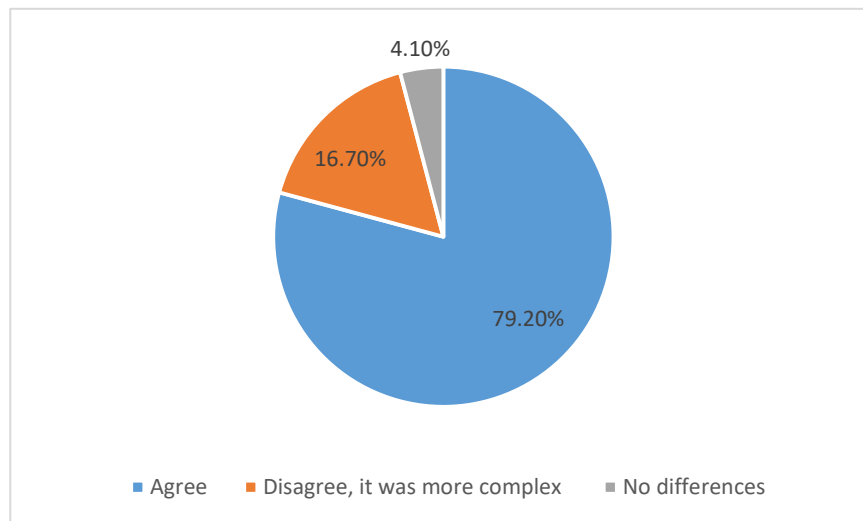


Figure 10. School administration's follow-up of the educational process

Figure 10 shows that a majority of respondents (79.2%) believed that the school administration process in following up the education process is smooth and easy, while only 16.7% expressed difficulty in the follow-up process in online education. Finally, just 4.1% thought there was no difference between the duties required of the follow-up process in both virtual and conventional education.

Subquestion 10: What are the reasons behind your response?

The respondents provided two response types. Those who thought that the follow-up administration in online education was smooth and easy made the following claims:

1. In online classes, you don't need to take permission from them.
2. The school leader or her representative can attend the lessons without ignoring her duties and follow up the performance of the teacher and pupils continuously through the platform.
3. It is easy to communicate and record attendance through a mobile.
4. It makes it easier for the administration to know the level of the teacher without entering the classroom.

Those who thought that the follow-up administration in online education is not smooth nor easier said:

1. We, the primary school female teachers, faced difficulties with the leaders and the school administration during the online class times and their conflict with times of Asr and Maghrib prayers, where the online class begins with the afternoon and Maghrib Azan, and this leads to the teacher not being late for class to perform the obligatory prayer.
2. Online learning obligated the school administration to work continuously day and night.

3. Not all teachers follow the same method in teaching the material or achieving the goals. The role of management becomes more difficult in terms of making the scientific results, and the general process between teachers is the same or less close.

4. Discussion

The findings of this study provide useful insights into how English language teachers felt about using the *Madrasati* e-learning platform. Initially, a majority of teachers found the shift to e-teaching challenging. One of the major problems they reported was not having their pupils in front of them, as in the conventional face-to-face classroom setting.

Hazaea et al. (2021) reported many of the challenges associated with using online learning. Amongst these was the teachers' inability to use the platform. However, as this study's participants became more familiar with the technology, they became more positive about this method of delivery. The teachers said that they learned new things and believed that "the new interactive programs helped us to perform online teaching".

Furthermore, the English teachers were positive about the idea of continuing their own postgraduate studies online, if given the opportunity to do so. Interestingly, while Alolaywi (2021) found that teachers preferred online teaching because it kept them safe during the pandemic, this study found that online learning was valued because "Studying while you are at home makes you relaxed both psychologically and emotionally".

In terms of the advantages that e-learning brought to their pupils, most of the teachers believed that e-learning enabled their pupils to be more independent and self-reliant. It helped to develop their confidence in their language learning. This is one of this study's most significant findings and it supports Landrum's (2020) finding that pupils' ability to self-regulate their learning led to satisfaction and increased pupils' confidence in their ability to learn.

This study also revealed some of the shortcomings of e-learning that the teachers perceived. Some believed that teaching a language online was more difficult than teaching other subjects online, while others thought that the platform made it harder to attract pupils' attention. Some teachers also showed concerns about exactly who was doing the online work, raising the idea that the pupils were being helped by their guardians. This finding echoes Al-Ahdal and Alqasham's (2020) concerns about the opportunity for cheating that online learning brings.

Finally, the teachers believed that there were no major differences between conventional and online learning platforms from an administrative perspective. A majority of the respondents said that reporting to parents was simple: "using WhatsApp to communicate was very easy". It was also easy for administrators to follow up on a pupil's performance. They also thought that the *Madrasati* platform made it easy for schools' administrations to monitor the performance of both teachers and pupils.

Overall, this study reinforces Mishra et al.'s (2020) claim that online teaching will continue to exist postpandemic and that simply going back to conventional teaching is not feasible.

5. Conclusion

This study investigated English language teachers' perspectives on using the *Madrasati* online platform in secondary and intermediate schools in Saudi Arabia. The data shows that, despite some disadvantages, teachers had a positive attitude towards using the platform due its efficacy and ease of use even without their receiving prior training.

Therefore, two conclusions can be drawn here. First, even after lifting COVID restrictions and returning to conventional face-to-face classrooms, online teaching platforms such as *Madrasati* should continue to be implemented since there are emerging variants of the virus that could again hinder face-to-face classes. Therefore, schools—whether administrators, teachers, or pupils—should be prepared for a return to online teaching at any given moment. Secondly, even if the world has managed to eradicate the virus, online teaching platforms should continue to be used—alongside conventional face-to-face classrooms—because of their demonstrable efficacy. They have provided remarkable opportunities for self-education, learner autonomy, and the chance to acquire a foreign language such as English faster and with lower costs. As a result, the world should look at online teaching platforms as a way forward rather than as a temporary solution to learning during the pandemic and be prepared for online learning to be the new normal.

6. Recommendations

Based on this research, the following are recommended:

1. Online learning should be given a more permanent place in EFL curricular design because the advantages cited by the teachers outweigh the disadvantages.

2. Teachers need greater flexibility in terms of course design and assessment to ensure that the online learning process is fair to all the learners.
3. Institutions must invest in developing technological tools suited to the specific needs of Saudi EFL learners.
4. Teachers, learners, and their guardians should be sensitised to the fact that the pandemic has not yet died down and that the online learning mode may be here to stay. They must therefore prepare themselves both mentally and technically to gain the most benefit from e-learning while the pandemic lasts.

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