EFL LEARNERS ANXIETY DURING AND AFTER COVID-19: ANALYSIS

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Abstract

COVID-19 has impacted the majority of the world's sectors. In most places throughout the world, education is the only industry that has entirely transitioned to an online method. During the pandemic, online learning was the ideal choice for continuing education, particularly in tertiary education. The purpose of this study is to identify the issues and hurdles that English language learners (EFL) have when transitioning to online learning in the second semester of 2020 because to the COVID-19 epidemic. This study's contribution is to analyse learners' new experiences in online education and to examine the practicality of virtual ways of learning. The study discovered that the primary issues influencing and impacting online EFL learning during COVID-19 are technological, academic, and communication concerns. This study focuses on the obstacles and variables that influence the acceptability and usage of E-Learning as a teaching tool in higher education. As a result, it will aid in the development of a strategic plan for the effective implementation of e-learning, as well as the acceptance of technology as a good step toward evolution and transformation.

Keywords: COVID-19 Pandemic, EFL learners, learning challenges, E-learning.

Introduction

The impacts of e-learning and its components on language acquisition are demonstrated in this research. In this study, we refer to second language acquisition or foreign language learning as language learning. Language learning via distant education is popular across the world, and it may be accomplished using the internet, multimedia, CDs, DVDs, and a variety of other methods. Because language acquisition is difficult and time-consuming, as well as expensive in some situations, we may save expenses and time by utilising distance education and e-learning. COVID-19, a worldwide public health issue, was declared by the World Health Organization (WHO) in January 2020 as a new coronavirus disease

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epidemic and was declared a pandemic in March 2020 [1]. Numerous institutions, universities, and colleges have discontinued face-to-face instruction. This will have a detrimental influence on educational activities because social distance is important at this period. Educational institutions are attempting to devise different approaches to dealing with this tough situation [3]. This shutdown fueled the expansion of online educational activities, ensuring that education would not be disrupted. Many faculty members have been involved in determining the best way to provide online course material, engage students, and conduct assessments [4]. This crisis would force organisations that had previously been unwilling to adjust to adopt new technologies. The educational sectors were having a tough time dealing with the contemporary environment; professional education, particularly medical education, was more difficult [5].

The purposeful use of networked information and communications technology in teaching and learning is generally referred to as e-learning [1]. E-learning may also be characterised in this way: the use of electronic systems such as the internet, computers, and multimedia CDs with the goal of reducing expenditures and goings and comings. Now that we've covered the definitions of e-learning, let's look at the characteristics and benefits of e-learning. We may modify our perspective on e-learning by understanding the following features: it is a learner-centered teaching process, and the duty of the instructor is to lead or facilitate this teaching process. It is handy for students to access at any time and from any location. It is a form of cooperative learning. E-learning is quick and dynamic, and it saves money (like: travel time and travel costs for students). It encourages self-paced learning, allowing students to learn at their own speed. E-learning encourages interaction between students and educators. It also promotes holistic learning by including all instructional materials and technologies, such as virtual classrooms and simulations. Most methods of e-learning provide significant benefits such as flexibility, convenience, and the opportunity to work at the learner's own speed [2]. As you can see, E-Acquisition, like communicative techniques of language learning, is founded on learners. Learners are the primary pillars in the learning process, and they may become self-sufficient by utilising e-learning and choosing what they want to accomplish.

Despite its benefits, e-learning has various flaws and drawbacks, including as Learners' social relationships suffer as a result of e-learning. Some students have limited understanding on how to use the internet and computers, therefore they are unable to work effectively with them. E-learning minimises the number of face-to-face sessions and instructor monitoring of students. Some teachers have little expertise or knowledge of this type of teaching/learning process. Because e-learning takes place in certain virtual settings, is primarily based on the internet, and can be done from anywhere in the globe, it minimises the number of face-to-face contacts and social ties. Furthermore, because e-learning users must be able to deal with technology such as the internet and computers, they must be conversant with these. Users may encounter difficulties due to a lack of technical understanding.

This virtual class of e-learning was created to increase the students' conviction and faith in their faculty throughout the COVID-19 epidemic [5], not only to complete the course but also to keep in continual contact with the learners. It is expected that with the deployment of e-learning, faculty members' roles will shift from conventional teacher-centric to student-centric models, which will suit the current innovative curriculum used at our college of medical. As a result, the purpose of this research is to estimate university staff perspectives, evaluate their experiences, identify hurdles, and analyse their difficulties to e-learning during the COVID-19 pandemic. Furthermore, the study will look at the characteristics that influence the adoption of e-learning as a tool for teaching in higher education, which might aid future efforts to implement e-learning not just during the pandemic but also in other non-pandemic scenarios throughout the teaching life.

Literature Review

The section that follows contains earlier research in online learning undertaken during the COVID-19 crisis, as well as several studies linked to online learning issues and educational technology in general. In a basic education institution in Kuwait, a research was done to assess students' perspectives on the future of mobile learning in the aftermath of the current epidemic. The survey concluded with students having a positive opinion of using mobile learning in higher education. The study's benefit is the advice for building and delivering courses concerning the usage and use of m-learning. The downside of this study is that the sample size (52 participants) is insufficient to generalise m-learning in higher education (Alanezi & AlAzwani, 2020). Another research looked into the problems of online learning in medical education during the COVID-19 epidemic (Rajab, Mohammad, Gazal, & Alkattan, 2020). The study included 208 participants: students and faculty members from Alfaisal University's college of medicine in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia. Communication, evaluation, online education experience, technology usage tools, time management, anxiety, and coronavirus illness stress were mentioned as problems in the research. Shih (2005) performed a research to evaluate Taiwanese EFL learners' online learning practises. It was also shown that effective learners employed a broader range of tactics, including metacognitive and cognitive strategies, than failed learners. Puzziferro (2008) investigated the association between self-regulated learning practises and college students' online learning results. The most commonly utilised tactics were effort management, followed by time and study environment, while peer learning and assistance seeking were the least commonly employed. It was also shown that time and learning environment were the online learning techniques that might predict students' grades. Students who handled their time properly and studied in a favourable setting were more likely to succeed in their online courses.

Liu and Feng (2011) established a link between metacognitive methods, online learning behaviour, and test success in their study. The study's authors found that students in the high-score group utilised more metacognitive methods than those in the low-score group. The authors also discovered that pupils who spent more time learning performed better. As previously noted, utilising good online language learning methodologies appears to be critical to reaching a successful outcome in online language learning. Previous research has also found a link between the usage of online language learning tools and academic accomplishment. Many students, however, struggle in an online learning environment and prefer a face-to-face classroom situation (Webster & Hackley, 1997). During the epidemic, however, students stated that online learning was successful. Yildiz (2020) did a meta-analysis research on current trends in educational technology from 2015 to 2020. The research focused on a variety of aspects in the sector. The study's findings demonstrated that the use of educational technology in teaching and learning was suitable. The influence of the pandemic on entrepreneurial education is discussed in an essay published by the editorial board Liguori and Winkler (2020). They advocated for greater research and resources on the issues of online entrepreneurship education. Another research analysed the significance of online learning and examined the examination of the pandemic's shortcomings, strengths, problems, and potential in online education (Shivangi, 2020). The research offered some recommendations for dealing with online learning issues in the aftermath of natural catastrophes and epidemics. Wolfinger conducted a case study for characteristics of teenage online learners in Pennsylvania (2016). The project concentrated on achieving entirely online virtual learning through middle school. The study focused on academics, social support, learner characteristics, and educational support. The findings highlighted the significance of instructors' roles in virtual learning, and parental engagement might boost their academic success. The International Association of Universities 2020 sponsored a poll to assess the global impact of COVID-19 on higher education institutions. The study's findings suggested that the COIVD-19 issue had an impact on all of the institutions' activities. Alturise (2020) did a research at Qassim University in Saudi Arabia on the satisfaction of learners and teachers in the online learning paradigm utilising the Blackboard platform. The study indicated that while e-learning is a step forward in education, more effort is needed to develop online learning applications.

During COVID-19, several researchers study issues and impediments in e-learning based on their educational environment and the facilities supplied by various institutes. The purpose of this research is to identify university students' challenges during the present global crisis, as well as potential solutions that might improve learners' performance and overcome these challenges in the future.

Research Methodology
The current study aims to identify the obstacles faced by learners during the shift to online learning in the second semester of 2020 owing to the COVID-19 epidemic, as well as to investigate potential remedies and proposals for future virtual learning. The research was carried out at the undergraduate level with English language learners. It was carried out following the completion of online teaching sessions and during final examinations in the second semester of 2020. The sample included 184 students, 85 male and 99 female, from various bachelor's degrees with English majors. Students in the English department make up the majority of college students, whereas students in other areas are few. The majority of the pupils have no prior experience with online learning. Before the recent crises, one or two Arabic general courses were offered online on the main campus, and they were optional. The students chose to take the online courses available, but the exams were held in person.

Data Collection
An online survey-based questionnaire was constructed for the inquiry and data gathering to assess the EFL online learning obstacles amid the extraordinary health and economic crises. The survey-based questionnaire had 23 multiple-choice, yes/no, and open-ended items that addressed the study's goals. It was created using Google Forms and sent to students via WhatsApp groups at the end of the second semester of 2020. There are several elements to the questionnaire. The first section is about students' demographic information, the second section includes a set of questions about learners' experiences with online learning platforms (Blackboard, and other platforms) and the facilities that they could use, the third section is about the problems that they encountered during online learning, the fourth section is about their satisfaction with online learning, and finally, open-ended questions about online education -d The validity and reliability of the questionnaire were verified.

Result and Discussion
The study used descriptive research methods to analyse the collected data, and its conclusions are centred on four major factors: The utilisation of the Blackboard tool's provided activities and services. The difficulties and stumbling blocks experienced during online English learning programmes. The first study topic concerned the learners' capacity to use all of the Blackboard features for online learning activities. They were able to enrol in online classes, engage actively, submit assignments, and take exams. Some professors utilised WhatsApp to conduct courses; the biggest percentage was utilising WhatsApp with a ratio of 72 percent, with emails coming in second with a ratio of 53.60 percent. Zoom came in third place, with a percentage of 33.50 percent. Other systems, such as Google Classroom and Microsoft Team, were used by 24% of respondents. Only 18% of learners had no problems during their e-learning experience. The score for online access and material downloading is 14%. Issues in conducting online tests score 13% because some students were unable to access the online exams or had internet connectivity issues. The no lab session score is 8%. These online learning-related difficulties are addressed in Figure four below. The last research question examines learners' satisfaction with online learning throughout the epidemic. Online learning pleased 43.20 percent of learners, while some preservation satisfied 42.90 percent. 13.80% of learners were dissatisfied with online learning.
The current study sought to analyse the online education difficulties confronting EFL students during the current epidemic. E-learning problems, learner engagement with information technology tools in e-learning, and learner satisfaction with online learning are some of these concerns. According to the

findings, many students (more than 30 percent) missed several chores, obligations, and contacts with teachers, all of which are critical in the educational process. The findings revealed certain technical challenges with the Blackboard tool, such as online class access, class materials downloading, audio, and video playback, which is consistent with (2020) study, which revealed apprehension regarding the technical issue's resolution. According to the study, technological assistance is required to ensure the dependability of online learning. During the crisis, teachers and students were compelled to address this issue and use other online education platforms for uninterrupted study. They utilised platforms such as emails to submit their assignments, Microsoft Teams, Google, and the Zoom platform to conduct certain lectures owing to the course not being available in Blackboard at the start of the transition or students being unable to log in to Blackboard. Furthermore, the WhatsApp platform was used by the majority of students during online learning. Because most students utilised their mobile phones in this context, the availability of mobile phones aided the success of online learning. The findings of this study align with the findings of (2019), who supported the influence of utilising social media applications in learning and advocated activation of these applications in English language learning.

As seen in the results section, obstacles and related online concerns in online English language learning received the highest scores of any statistical measure. The study addressed the challenges that most EFL Learners experienced during COVID-19 online learning; the majority of the students are from rural locations where the network is under strain owing to the COVID-19 crisis as all students, instructors, and most other sectors migrated to work online. Learners encountered some difficulty accessing online lectures, downloading materials, performing online tests, and so on; students identified these challenges as the most serious. Some other students were unable to open online tests on their mobile phones due to a format or extension that their devices did not allow. Other challenges that the students encountered were a lack of digital abilities in using Blackboard platforms, the requirement for all online learning equipment, tools, and systems, a lack of genuine English language practise with the professors and their classmates, and so on. The current paper's findings support prior study on the same topics of online learning conducted at COVID-19, and the results revealed that students are dissatisfied with distant education and that numerous difficulties have been encountered. The last topic is an examination of learners' overall satisfaction with online English language instruction during the COVID-19 situation. Offering some online courses at most educational institutions prior to the COVID-19 pandemic aided, facilitated, and gave a good chance for students and institutes to transition to online learning following the pandemic's breakout. However, at the beginning, the majority of the students went online for the first time. They lacked the knowledge and confidence to study online through a new medium. Most learners were able to overcome the majority of the technological challenges associated with online learning systems after some time. However, English language learning issues continue to be a barrier in online learning during the epidemic. These findings contribute to the growing body of literature on the significant challenges and problems encountered by EFL learners during the abrupt transition to online learning due to the COVID-19 pandemic, and the necessary steps are required to facilitate the online education process and overcome the reported issues.

The respondents were from a variety of university levels. This revealed the EFL students' mentality and the challenges they were dealing with. There were 228 students that took part in the poll, including both male and female students, as well as married and unmarried students. As the learner's marital situation has a significant impact on his or her psychology.

Figure 1: Student response for that question Remote learning during pandemic was good decision.
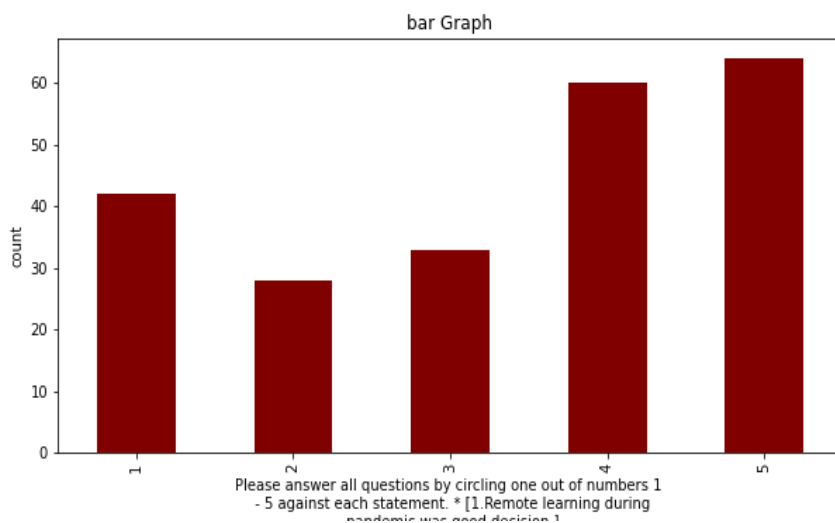

The findings suggest that the students in this study displayed a variety of conceptions of engagement with their online English course in relation to many constructs of engagement. As illustrated by survey responses, students demonstrated their learning through classroom engagement, contact with instructors and classmates, skills practise, emotional interest in the class topic, and performance in class. Furthermore, they were discovered to have a favourable relationship between enjoyment and involvement. Nearly half of the respondents said their experience studying English as a foreign language was unsatisfactory.

Figure 2: Student response for that question I closely observe news about the coronavirus (COVID-19)
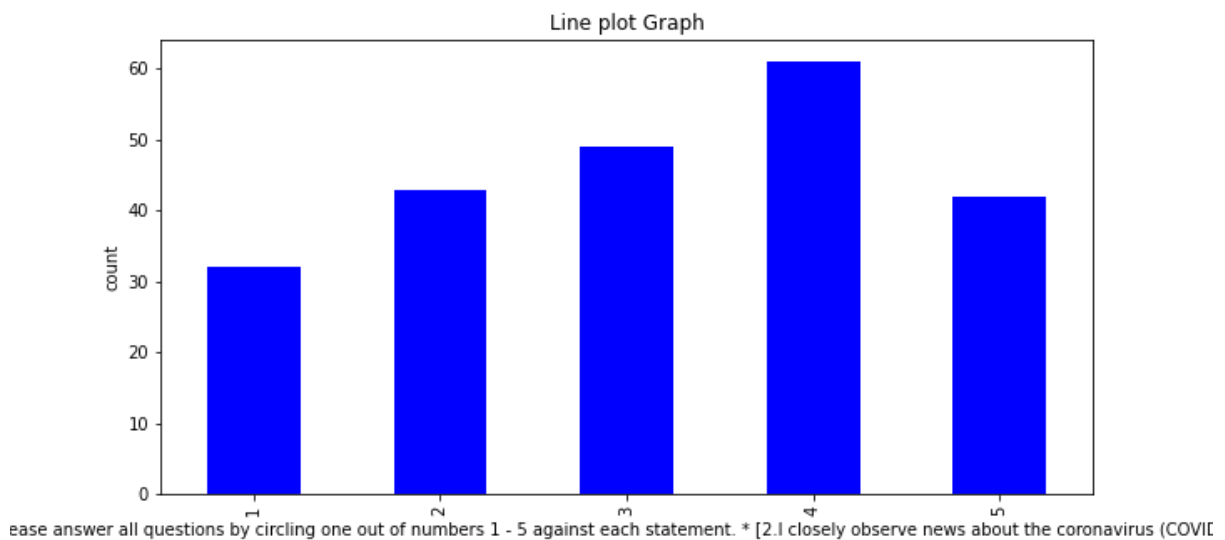
This figure shows that, how much respondent observe news about coronavirus (COVID-19). As the above data collected from our survey clearly shows that nearly 60% and above of the respondents are disagree and 30% of respondents are strongly agree and 32% are agree , 45% and above are shows that don't know and 40% are of strongly disagree to observe news about the coronavirus (COVID-19).

Figure 3: Student response for that question I feel that there are too many deadlines in my work/assignments
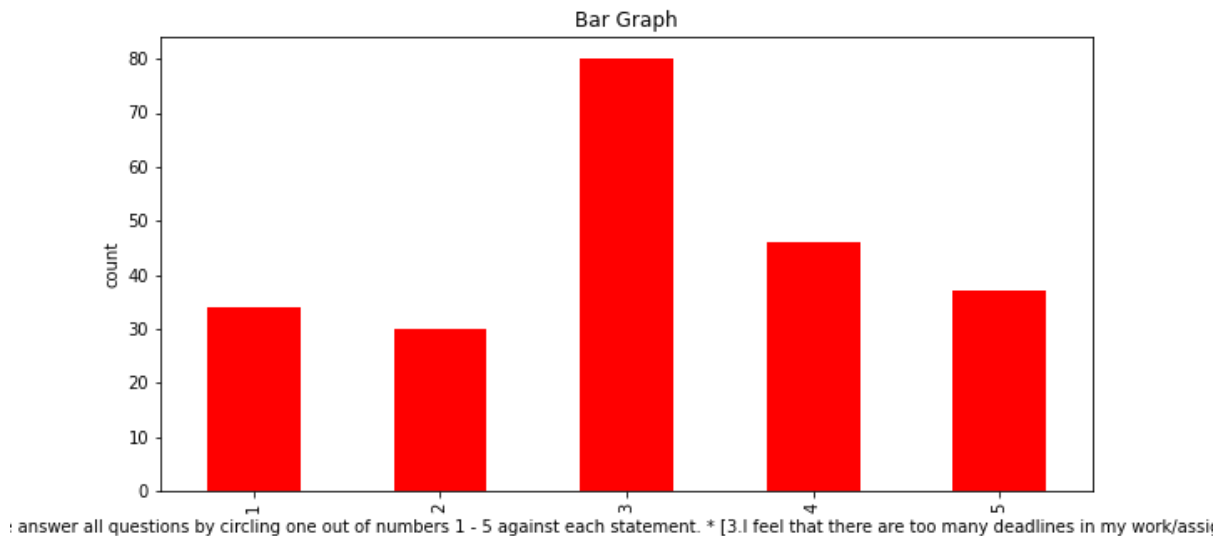
This figure and survey shows that, respondent feels that there are too many deadlines in my work/assignments.

As the above data collected from our survey clearly shows that nearly 80% and above of the respondents are don't know about deadlines of work/assignments and 30% of respondents are agree and 34% are strongly agree , 45% and above are shows that they are disagree and near about 40% are of strongly disagree.

Figure 4: Student response for that question my appetite has changed.
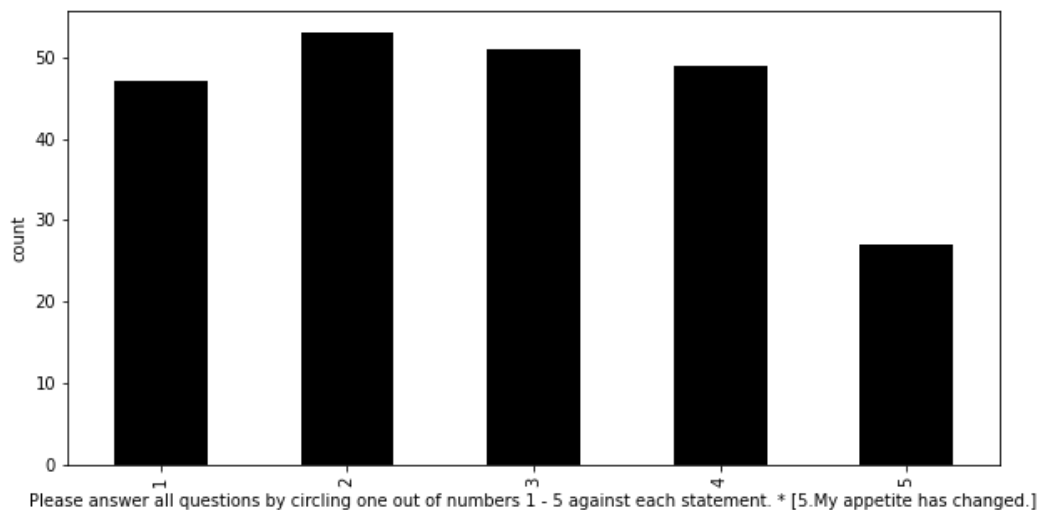
This figure and survey shows that, respondent my appetite has changed.

As the above data collected from our survey clearly shows that nearly 50% and above of the respondents are agree My appetite has changed and 45% and above of respondents are Strongly agree and 50% are s don't know , 49% are shows that they are disagree and near about 30% are of strongly disagree.
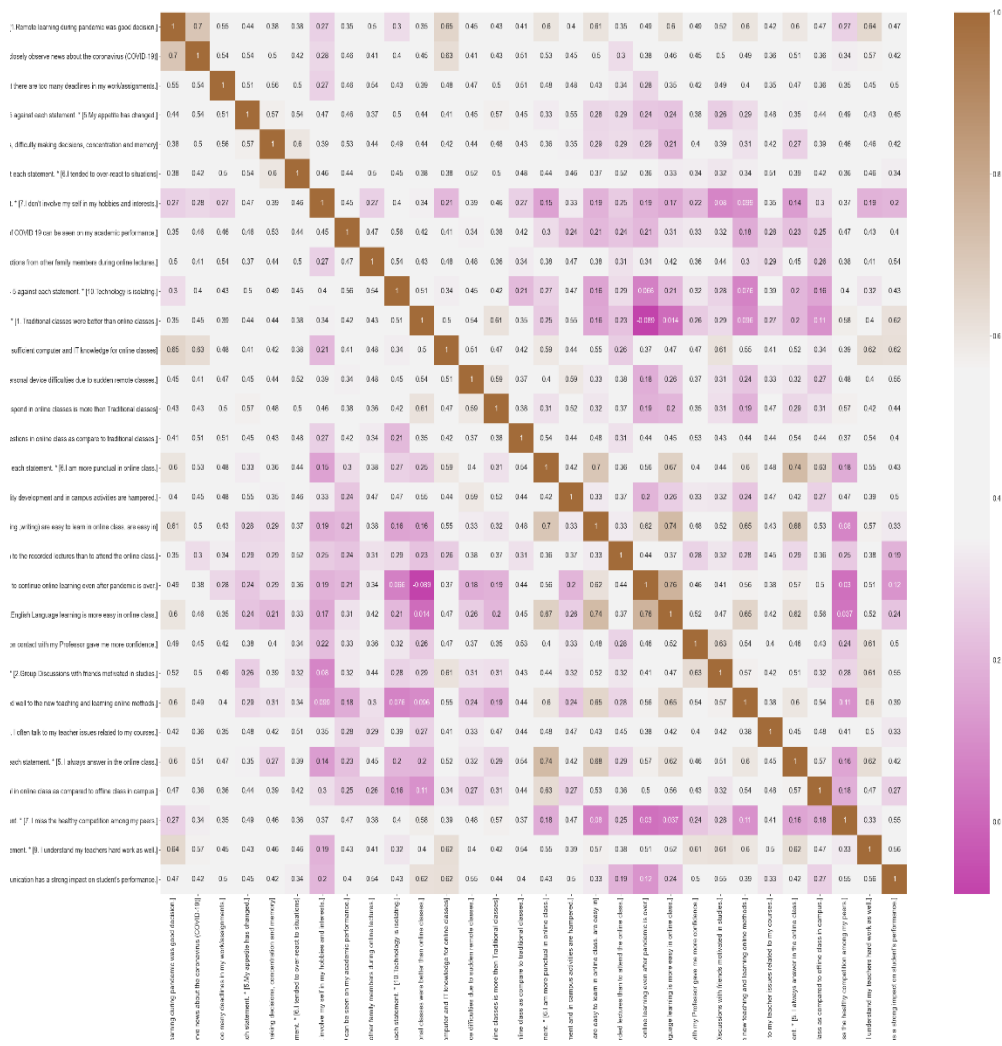
Figure 5: simple heatmap
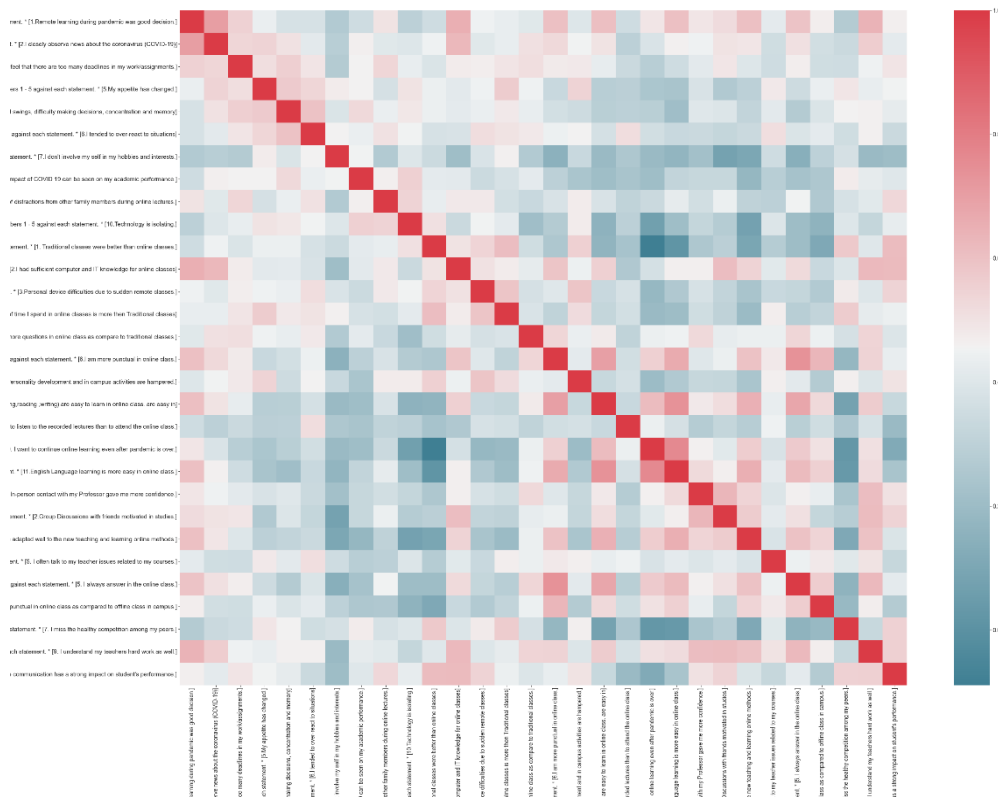
Above correlation matrix representing correlation between different variables involved in the study, overall matrix shows how one parameter is co related with another and more the intensity of colour it means more that parameter co relates with another. Above correlation matrix is simple heatmap.
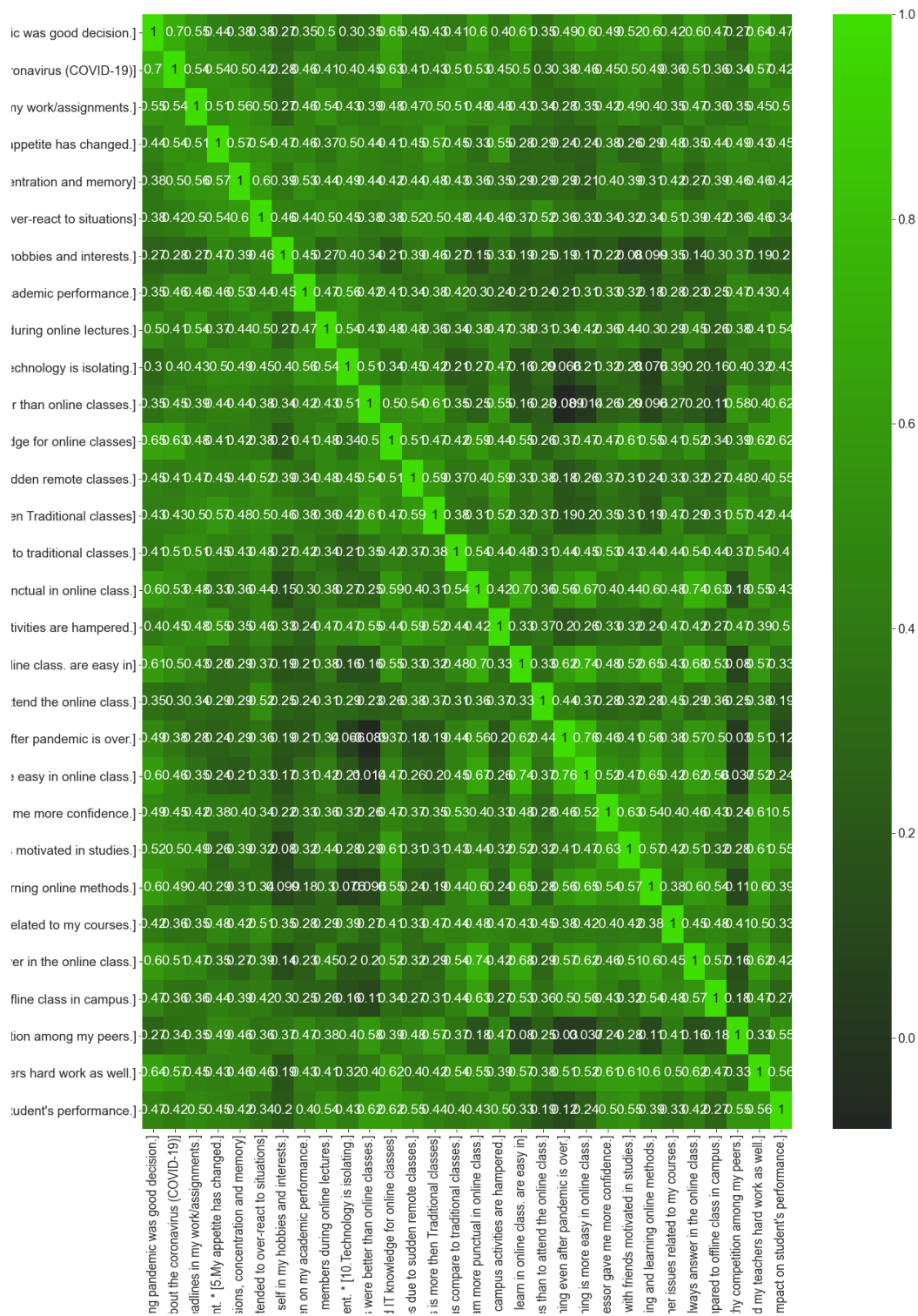
Figure 6: diverging pallet heatmap

Above correlation matrix representing correlation between different variables involved in the study, overall matrix shows how one parameter is co related with another and more the intensity of colour it means more that parameter co relates with another. Above correlation matrix is diverging pallet heatmap.

Figure 7: cube helix pallet heatmap

Above correlation matrix representing correlation between different variables involved in the study, overall matrix shows how one parameter is co related with another and more the intensity of colour it means more that parameter co relates with another. Above correlation matrix is cube helix pallet heatmap.

Figure 8: dark pallet heatmap

Above correlation matrix representing correlation between different variables involved in the study, overall matrix shows how one parameter is co related with another and more the intensity of colour it means more that parameter co relates with another. Above correlation matrix is dark pallet heatmap

Conclusion

The study's goal is to analyse and investigate online learning obstacles and concerns faced by COVID-19 EFL learners. During the epidemic, synchronised e-learning was the remedy. It did, however, have a detrimental impact on the learners' performance and learning outcomes. In the past, e-learning was underused, particularly in underdeveloped nations. However, the present COVID-19 epidemic has compelled the whole globe to rely on it for education. The majority of participants in the current study highly agreed with the perceived usefulness, perceived simplicity of use, and acceptance of e-learning. The most significant barriers to embracing e-learning were insufficient/unstable internet access, inadequate computer laboratories, a shortage of computers/laptops, and technical issues. Age under 40 years, teaching experience less than 10 years, and male gender were important predictors of e-learning acceptability. This study emphasises the problems and variables influencing the acceptability of e-learning as a tool for teaching in higher education in developing countries, which may lead to strategic development and implementation of e-learning and regard technology as a good step towards evolution and progress.

According to the findings of the study, the most significant problems faced by EFL learners in online learning were technological concerns. Some students encountered issues with internet connectivity, access to lectures, and downloading course materials. Online tests could not be accessed through mobile devices by students. In terms of language communication challenges, learners were unable to successfully connect with teachers during virtual English language skills lessons, as seen by their replies to open-ended questions. EFL learners' happiness with online learning is poor; fewer than half are pleased with online learning, 14 percent are dissatisfied with online learning, and 43 percent are not entirely supportive of continuing online education if there is no crisis. It is suggested that more study be conducted to better understand instructors' perspectives and experiences with online English language instruction during the epidemic.

Limitation of the study

There are several possible drawbacks to this study. Because this is a cross-sectional research, individuals' impressions may shift over time. As a result, further longitudinal research is necessary to improve our understanding of the variables that are crucial to the adoption of e-learning systems in our society. Furthermore, the current investigation was carried out in a single medical college. As a result, more research should be conducted in the future employing participants from various universities to examine the adoption and acceptability of e-learning in higher educational institutions.

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