THE ROLE OF MODERN TECHNOLOGIES IN LEARNING ENGLISH LANGUAGE DURING COVID-19 PANDEMIC

Simona Serafimovska
Goce Delchev University of Shtip, North Macedonia, simona.serafimovska@ugd.edu.mk
Natka Jankova Alagjozovska
Goce Delchev University of Shtip, North Macedonia, natka.alagjozovska@ugd.edu.mk

Abstract: In this paper, an attempt is made to emphasize the progressiveness in learning English in conditions of pandemic crisis with the help of modern technologies, which undoubtedly in the past two years have played a crucial role in this educational process. The success of learning the English language with the application of modern technologies, in which the main place is occupied by distance learning with the use of electronic devices, depends on several other factors. The equipment of higher education institutions with modern technologies forms the basis of distance learning, but it is also very important that teachers and assistants are ready to be actively involved in the electronic learning system with direct assistance to students, whether they are in the classroom or out.

The leading place in the study of English in the conditions of pandemic was the use of modern technological systems that enabled direct connection and interactivity of a large number of immediate users with a high degree of operability. Among them, the most common are: Google Classroom, Zoom, Schoology and Edmodo, The Moodle as well as Google Meet and WhatsApp. However, recent research conducted during 2021 shows that the most used platform internationally is WhatsApp. In decision making about which e-learning platform to be used the most influential factors were accessibility and affordability while the unstable network is the biggest obstacle to the use of platforms in online learning.

Keywords: E-learning, on-line teaching, pandemic, E-platforms, modern technologies and English language

1. INTRODUCTION

Towards the end of 2019, the world was preoccupied with information about pandemic infections that were later declared to be COVID 19, and the source of this unknown disease that was spreading at an incredible speed was China's Wuhan. The pandemic did not bypass our areas, and in a short time the world organization declared a general pandemic at the world level and proposed a series of measures that negatively affect the normal higher education process.Many countries have halted all face-to-face activities, including in-person schooling, due to the respiratory sickness caused by the desease. The pandemic required major adjustments in most aspects of life in order to deal with the consequences of pandemic control measures, and education was no exception.

During the epidemic, many countries' colleges, secondary schools, and elementary schools embraced an online education technique. Regardless of whether or not they were familiar with or prepared for online education, teachers and students have had to quickly adapt their teaching approaches. As a result of this predicament, a new phrase in academia has emerged: emergency remote education. Studies and models relating to online education have long been pushed.

Before the pandemic appeared, a good day of teaching at universities took place mainly in classrooms and with physical presence, while teachers and students did not have much experience with distance learning. For example, Taiwan has long supported accreditation of digital courses at the university level, and universities there help teachers record e-learning materials. As a result, university professors have more experience in teaching online. (Toquero, 2020).

The new situation in several universities in the world has led to different approaches in the educational process, but also different interpretations of the situation among students and teachers. However, online teaching had to be practiced. The latest studies have shown that in pandemic conditions, the application of new technologies in the teaching process was inevitable, therefore appropriate training for both teachers and students was necessary. Online learning has already become a practice.

2. SOME ASPECTS OFON-LINE TEACHING DURING COVID-19 PANDEMIC

The epidemic has accelerated the move toward online and distance learning in higher education. However, the biggest obstacle to online learning is now the economic divide and uneven growth between regions, particularly in rural areas where resources are limited and teachers, equipment. The aforementioned difficulties considerably lower students' motivation for learning, which ultimately leads to imbalances in the growth of remote education and has a detrimental effect on higher education. Online teaching also brought certain problems related to the lack of appropriate technology, insufficient networking of higher education institutions with quality internet, inadequate

training of teachers and students, and of course the insufficient social element and socializing of students. These elements may reduce satisfaction with online learning and discourage further use (Ferdig et al., 2020).

According to the Ministry of Education's policy, university students were compelled to take online courses offered by their individual institutions during the pandemic, which dramatically expanded the use of online learning. But it is worthwhile. However, it is important to consider whether online education will remain popular in the future without such outside support and whether it would be as enticing with it.

Because of this, maintaining the continuous advancement of online education in the wake of the epidemic requires understanding the crucial factors affecting its use and suggesting modifications, On the other hand, the analysis of earlier studies revealed that students' willingness to use and accept e-learning platforms has a major role in determining whether online learning is successful as a teaching tool. The impact of external elements should therefore be taken into account in order to understand students' attitudes and adoption intentions towards online learning systems, and the elements should be explored through analysis of the surroundings where the students are educated. (Mo et al., 2021) the success of online teaching depends on the quality of the platform, the readiness of the teachers and of course the quality of the students. This will certainly contribute to the success of this type of teaching.

3. SOME SPECIFICS OF ON-LINE TEACHING AND USE OF NEW TECHNOLOGIES DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

All educational levels must immediately transition to online learning, which may present both an opportunity and a difficulty (Toquero, 2020). As a result, there has been a lot of research on remote emergency teaching during this terrible plague. It was said that there are many different reactions to higher education, such as non-responses, campus social isolation techniques, and a hasty reaction to entirely online courses.

According to a survey conducted among 1,148 professors employed by UK universities, Watermeyer and colleagues (2020). They asserted that online migration is seriously disrupting and producing severe dysfunction in both their personal and professional lives.

The results demonstrated that the quick switch to online learning was successful and that the learned skills may be put to good use going forward. Putra et al. (2020) used ten Indonesian websites to gather information about how pupils learned about the pandemic vacation. The results showed that parents' ability to support their children's learning and a lack of learning tools, such as Internet access, were to blame for students' difficulties learning at home. in Cyprus, Souleles and coworkers. (2020) held that disciplinary differences should be taken into account and that e-learning shouldn't be viewed as an addition to present teaching and learning methods. It is important to offer hurriedly organized seminars to teachers who need to address skill shortages, but this should not take the place of ongoing pedagogical and technology training.

Some professors from foreign Universities provided the following five specific teaching approaches for online education in pandemic scenarios when the outbreak in Beijing prevented students from attending class:

1) a strong association between online instructional design and student learning; 2) effective online material delivery; and

3) sufficient student support from instructors and teaching assistants.

4) high-quality participation to increase students' learning's breadth and depth; 5) backup measures to deal with unanticipated events on online learning platforms (Bao, 2020).

4. USE OF E-LEARNING SYSTEMS AND COMPLEX PLATFORMS IN TEACHING ENGLISH AS A FOREIGN LANGUAGE

E-learning is one of the methods used to give education (Priyanto, 2009). Learning Management Systems are another name for e-learning programs and tools (LMS). A learning management system, or LMS, is a piece of software that virtualizes traditional teaching and learning procedures.

A few examples of E-learning or online system learning based on LMS are Zoom, Skype, Google Hangouts Meet, Ed Link, Moodle, Edmodo, Schoology, Google Classroom, and Self Platform. An English teacher needs to be able to maximize the teaching-learning process while teaching English (Fitria, 2019)

a) In light of the explanation provided above, recent research have focused on the issue, "What is the most popular online learning platform utilized by English professors at colleges and universities around the globe? The research have demonstrated that some English professors utilize two or more online learning systems in addition to using one or more online learning system. The most popular online learning system(s) have specifically emerged from a number of E-learning platforms: The first is the online learning platform Google Classroom, which is used by 40.3% of English teachers. Google Classroom is a Learning Management System (LMS) that it offers teachers as a way to interact with their students and learners and to distribute resources, questions, and assignments (Zhang, 2016). Even

Google Classroom is used to coordinate and manage paperless assignments for student and instructor cooperation (Scholl, 2019). The second is the Zoom online learning platform, which is used by 7.8% of English teachers.

Zoom is a cloud-based video conferencing tool that may be used for live chat, webinars, online video conferencing, and audio conferences (Bernazzani, 2020). The third one is Schoology and Edmodo, which are used by 6.5% of English teachers. While Edmodo is a social network for educators that gives teachers tools to help them interact and communicate with their students and parents. Teachers can share student work, texts, videos, homework, and assignments.The Moodle, used by 5.3% of English teachers, was in fourth place. Moodle is a Learning Management System (LMS) that K–12 institutions, institutions of higher learning (colleges and universities), and private instructors use to supplement web-based learning in their courses and classes. The platform Google Meet and WhatsApp, which are used, respectively, by 2.8% and 2.6% of English teachers, tie for fifth place. The premium video conferencing tool offered by Google is called Google Hangouts Meet.

It's a service very much like video chat (Zapier, 2018). A computer-based technique called social networking enables people to share knowledge, concepts, and information with others via online communities and networks (Dollarhide, 2019). Social media includes, among other things, different platforms and etc. Studying after lessons, receiving tasks after class, taking an online test after class, and doing an online survey after class; Peer voting and evaluation after class; submission of work after class) and others (D) Roll call; Hardware and software status check; Other non-course-related reminders.

5. EXAMPLES AND EXPERIENCES IN APPLICATION OF THE NEW E-PLATFORMS DURING THE PANDEMIC

Research was done to find out which online learning tool was most frequently used during the pandemic conditions. Twelve different online learning platforms were presented to the participants. The platforms that were most often used during the pandemic are shown in Figure 1. Figure 1 in particular shows that the three most popular online platforms used were WhatsApp (34.11 percent), Zoom (18.6 percent), and Google Classroom (15.5 percent). platforms for first-figure e-learning during the pandemic vacation. Among e-learning platforms, Miro, Trello, and Seesaw are the least used. The least popular e-learning platforms are Seesaw, Trello, and Miro. In-depth research sheds light on higher education faculty members' preferences for online learning environments during home education in the pandemic era. According to the research, WhatsApp was the platform that institutions used the most frequently for their online learning throughout the pandemic. This result supports Coleman and O'Connor's (2019) findings that WhatsApp has gained popularity as a tool for learning assistance during the past ten years.

Students are increasingly familiar with WhatsApp's functions, which has increased its popularity. Almost everyone has a WhatsApp account, regardless of their age or background. University students and other young adults (18 to 34) regularly use WhatsApp to connect with friends and family. WhatsApp has been shown to facilitate learning goals and improve the learning experience (Zulkanain et al., 2020). (Madge et al., 2019). Zoom is the second most popular platform behind WhatsApp, with Google Classroom following in third.
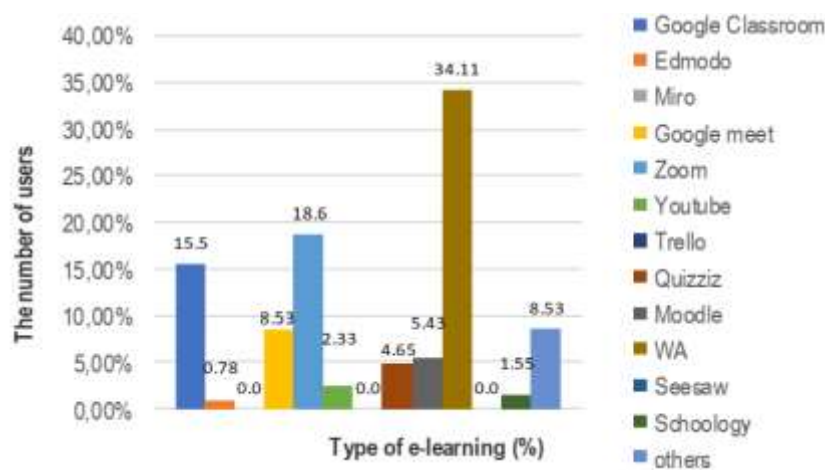

Figure 1. Platforms of e-learning during the COVID-19 pandemic

Zoom is one of the most widely used learning platforms today due to its ease of use and variety of features (Kohnke & Moorhouse, 2020). Professors even believe that Zoom is a powerful tool for facilitating online learning, and Google Classroom, one of Google's products, can be used to replace in-person instruction during the epidemic (Basilaia, 2020).

In response to the topic of why a certain e-learning platform was chosen during the pandemic, five elements were identified as being crucial in decision-making (Figure 2).
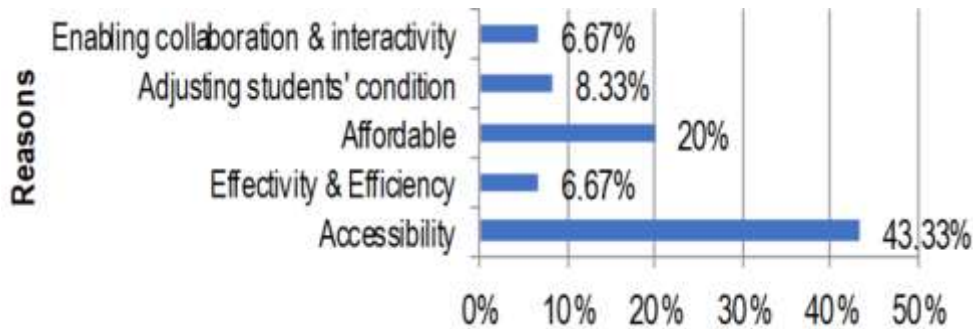
Figure 2. The five topmost reasons for choosing an online learning platform

Accessibility and cost are the most prominent factors in choosing an online learning platform, as seen in Figure 2. The ability to collaborate and communicate, modifying the health of the pupils, and effectiveness and efficiency are the last three factors. Users cited a number of factors for choosing online learning platforms, including accessibility, efficacy and efficiency, price, fit for students' needs, and the platform that the faculty already provides. Poor internet signals and internet quota issues are thought to be solved by a readily accessible and economical platform, especially in institutions with limited resources and budgets. WhatsApp has gained popularity as an accessible and affordable tool for online learning that supports collaborative learning, can store files for later use, and can be accessed from anywhere. There were 14 themes identified in terms of challenges faced when using an e-learning platform (Limited network, Insufficient Internet Quota, Unstable network, Power Outages, Controlling Aspects, Scheduling Aspects, Assessment, Plagiarism, Difficulties in Delivering Materials, Technical Problem, Adaptation Issue, Lack of Students' Comprehension, Nature Condition, Never happened), with the top five appearing in Figure 3.
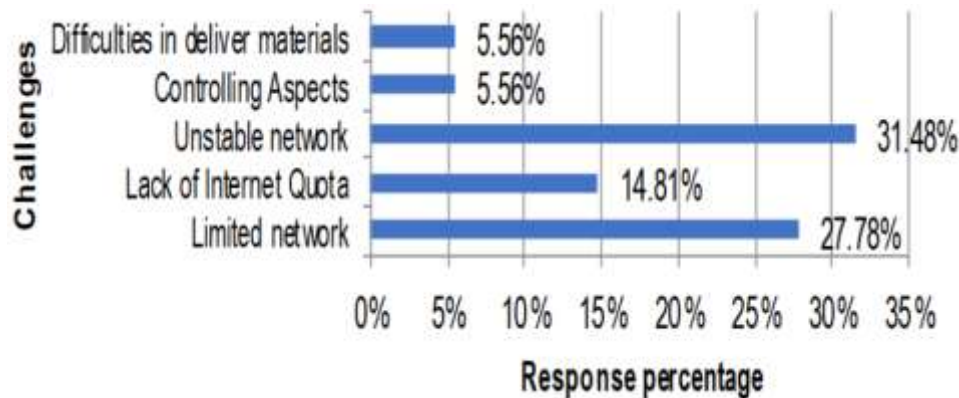

Figure 3. Top 5 reasons to choose an eLearning Platform

The majority of the issues that users encountered when utilizing the platforms for online learning were related to the internet network. The main barrier to using platforms for online learning is an unstable network, which is followed by a lack of internet quota, an unpredictable network, controlling factors, and challenges with content delivery. Users claim that the biggest obstacle is an issue with the internet network that is related to its level of stability and limitations. Online learning requires a strong internet connection because a weak internet connection

can obstruct access and hinder learning (Taunidah et al., 2021). The internet quota barrier is a typical barrier in underdeveloped countries because internet quotas aren't always available and not everyone has a sizable salary. Another obstacle with online learning was the transfer of knowledge due to professors' inability to explain some topics to pupils in person; difficulties carrying out practical exercises; and the fact that preparation required more time and effort than in-person classes. The final problem is the lecturer's incapacity to control students while they are learning online, which has a number of effects, one of which is a decline in the students' desire to put what they have learned into practice.

The practice of the educational process in a pandemic situation brought progress in the application of modern technologies in the study of English, although the application of those technologies was different at different levels of education and in different educational systems. Some students from the Goce Delchev University of Shtip, Republic of North Macedonia, tried to see these newly created post-pandemic conditions through our latest survey through the platform Survey Monkey. Through four most frequently asked questions related to online teaching, 25 students from the English department, 2nd year were interviewed. The results of the latest survey, conducted at the end of the pandemic conditions, are shown in Figures 4,5,6 and 7.

Figure 4. Illustration of the support of online learning at the institution

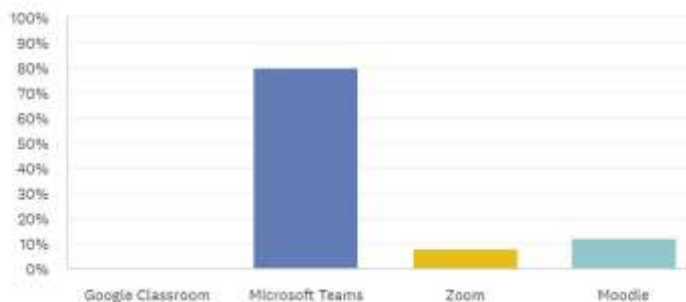*Figure 5: Graph of using the different kind of platforms in the process of ELT*

Do you use the Online Learning System in teaching English now in your institution?
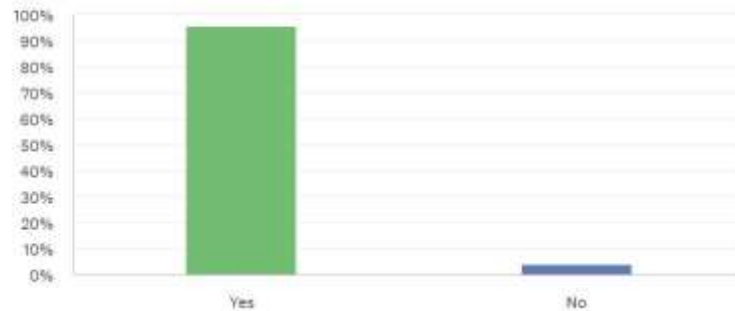
Answered: 25   Skipped: 0

Figure 6. Illustration of using online learning in the process of teaching English

Do your professors give you assignments or quizzes within the the Online Learning System ?

Answered: 25   Skipped: 0

Figure 7: Diagram depicting the various types of tasks used in online learning

The diagram shown in (Fig. 4) shows that literally 100% of the respondents answered that they support online teaching. On the question of what type of platform do you use during the study of English, it can be seen that most of the respondents answered that they use Microsoft Teams, which in practice is traditionally the most used platform at the Goce Delchev University of Shtip. Some of the respondents answered that they also use Zoom, Google Meet, and Moodle platforms. When asked if the online platform is currently used in the process of ELT, most of the surveyed students answered that 90% use it, while only about 10% do not use it (Fig. 6), which once again shows that online teaching in pandemic conditions is practically irreplaceable. *A diagram (Fig. 7), depicting the various types of tasks used in online learning* 60% of the respondents answered that there is a mix between tasks, essays, and quizzes. However, 20% answered that they have assignments, which practically means that online teaching is implemented with real values.

6. CONCLUSION
From all of the above, it can be concluded that the use of contemporary technology in the process of ELT has definitely played a significant role in the pandemic conditions. Learning outside of educational institutions was made possible through E-learning, on-line teaching and the use of educational platforms. The most commonly used E-platforms in learning English were: Google Classroom, Zoom, Schoology and Edmodo, The Moodle as well as Google Meet and WhatsApp.
The International experience and research has shown that the most commonly used E-platform in terms of COVID-19 is WhatsApp with 34.11%, followed by Zoom and Google Classroom with 18.6% and 15.5%, respectively. The

main reason to choose certain e-learning platform was its accessibility (with high 43.33%). With 31.48%, unstable networks are still the main barrier to using platforms for online learning.

REFERENCES

Bao, W. (2020). *COVID -19 and Online Teaching in Higher Education: A Case Study of Peking University*. Hum. BehavEmerg Tech 2 (2), 113–115. doi:10. 1002/hbe2.191

Basilaia, G. (2020). *Replacing the classic learning form at universities as an immediate response to the COVID-19 virus infection in Georgia.* International Journal for Research in Applied Science and Engineering Technology, 8(3), 101–108. https://doi.org/10.22214/ijraset.2020.3021

Basilaia, G., & Kvavadze, D. (2020). *Transition to online education in schools during a SARS-CoV-2 coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic in Georgia.* Pedagog. Res. **2020**, 5, em0060. (CrossRef)

Dollarhide, M. E. (2019, May 2). *Social Media.* Investopedia.www.investopedia.com/terms/s/social-media.asp

Kohnke, L., & Moorhouse, B. L. (2020). *Facilitating synchronous online language learning through Zoom*. RELC Journal, 003368822093723. https://doi.org/10.1177/0033688220937235

Madge, C., Breines, M. R., Dalu, M. T. B., Gunter, A., Mittelmeier, J., Prinsloo, P., & Raghuram, P. (2019). *WhatsApp use among African international distance education (IDE) students: transferring, translating and transforming educational experiences. Learning, Media and Technology*, 44(3), 267–282. https://doi.org/10.1080/17439884.2019.1628048

Mo, C.-Y., Hsieh, T.-H., Lin, C.-L., Jin, Y.Q., & Su, Y.-S. (2021). *Exploring the Critical Factors, the Online Learning Continuance Usage during COVID-19 Pandemic*. Sustainability 2021, 13, 5471. https://doi.org/ 10.3390/su13105471

Priyanto, H. (2009). *Redesign of E-Learning Development In Indonesia*. Journal for Vocational and Technical Education and Training, 9 (1). pp. 85-93. ISSN 1810-5416

Scholl, H. (2019). *My Google Classroom Training Guide*. Estalontech.

Singhal, T. (2020). *A Review of Coronavirus Disease-2019 (COVID-19).* Indian J. Pediatr. 87 (4), 281-286. doi:10.1007/s12098-020-03263-6

Souleles, N., Laghos, A., & Savva, S. (2020). *From Face-To-Face to Online: Assessing the Effectiveness of the Rapid Transition of Higher Education Due to the Coronavirus Outbreak,* in 15th International Technology, Education and Development Conference, Cyprus, November 9–10, 2020. doi:10.21125/iceri. 2020.0274

Toquero, C. M. (2020). *Challenges and Opportunities for Higher Education amid the COVID-19 Pandemic: The Philippine Context.* Pedagogical Res. 5 (4), em0063. doi:10.29333/pr/7947

Watermeyer, R., Crick, T., Knight, C., & Goodall, J. (2020). *COVID-19 and Digital Disruption in UK Universities: Afflictions and Affordances of Emergency OnlineMigration*. High Educ. (Dordr) 81, 623–641. doi:10.1007/s10734-020-00561-y

Zapier, M. (2018, April 25). *A guide to Google Chat: Google Hangouts vs. Google Hangouts Chat vs. Google Hangouts Meet. Zapier*. https://zapier.com/blog/googlehangouts-meet-guide/

Zhang, M. (2016). *Teaching with Google Classroom*. Packt Publishing Ltd.v.8n.3p.59

Zhang, W., Wang, Y., Yang, L., & Wang, C. (2020). *Suspending classes without stopping learning: China's education emergency management policy in the COVID-19 outbreak*. J. Risk Finan. Manag. 13:55. doi: 10.3390/jrfm13030055