Research Paper

Iranian and Turkish EFL Professors' Perceptions of the (De)merits of Virtual Learning Platforms: Issues Related to Instruction, Assessment, and Resources

Shirin Akbarzadeh[1], Parviz Alavinia[2*], Mehdi Sarkhosh[3]

[1]Ph.D. Candidate, Urmia University, Urmia, Iran
shirin_akbarzadeh@yahoo.com
[2]Associate Professor, Urmia University, Urmia, Iran
(Corresponding Author)*p.alavinia@urmia.ac.ir*
[3]Assistant Professor, Urmia University, Urmia, Iran
mdsarkhosh@gmail.com

Abstract

A bulk of research has been done on the use of technology in language learning and the results have shown that multimedia and hypertext environments resulted in greater gains in language learning than more traditional environments. Prior to the Covid-19 pandemic, online education was given little importance in the educational system of different countries, including Iran and Turkey. Actually, previously there was no need for online education. However, in the pandemic situation, the need for online classes and their significance in language learning became more ubiquitous. Thus, in view of the paucity of research on perceptions toward the efficacy of virtual learning, particularly the sheer dearth of comparative work on the issue, the researchers in the current study intended to investigate the practicality of commonly used online platforms in Iran and Turkey, i.e. Adobe Connect and Zoom. To this end, a total of 10 EFL professors (5 Iranian and 5 Turkish) participated in the interview session to deeply investigate their attitudes on the platforms of Zoom and Adobe Connect as regards issues related to materials and resources, instruction, and assessment. As the results of the interview showed, both Turkish and Iranian university professors had similar ideas about the online platforms and they listed some merits such as easy access, attractiveness, and applicability for teaching and learning in Covid-19. Also, the demerits were low interaction and communication, being demotivating for not disciplined learners, and so on. In general, based on the participants' points of view, both online platforms were useful in terms of materials and resources as well as instruction; however, they had less control over cheating on tests, in terms of assessment. Different parties such as teachers, syllabus designers, and materials developers will benefit from the outcomes of this study.

Keywords: Assessment; Instruction; Materials/Resources; Virtual Learning Platforms

برداشت اساتید زبان ایرانی و ترک از (عدم) شایستگی بسترهای یادگیری مجازی: مسائل مربوط به آموزش، ارزیابی و منابع

بخش عمده ای از تحقیقات در مورد استفاده از فناوری در یادگیری زبان انجام شده است و نتایج نشان داده است که محیط های چند رسانه ای و فرامتن در مقایسه با محیط های سنتی تر، دستاوردهای بیشتری در یادگیری زبان دارند. قبل از همه‌گیری کووید-۱۹، آموزش آنلاین در سیستم آموزشی کشورهای مختلف از جمله ایران و ترکیه اهمیت چندانی نداشت. در واقع قبلاً نیازی به آموزش آنلاین نبود. با این حال، در شرایط همه‌گیری، نیاز به کلاس‌های آنلاین و اهمیت آن‌ها در یادگیری زبان در همه جا فراگیرتر شد. بنابراین، با توجه به کمبود تحقیقات در مورد ادراکات نسبت به کارایی یادگیری مجازی، به ویژه کمبود کار تطبیقی روی این موضوع، محققان در مطالعه حاضر قصد داشتند تا به بررسی کاربردی بودن پلتفرم های آنلاین رایج در ایران و ترکیه بپردازند. یعنی **Adobe Connect** و **Zoom.** برای این منظور، در مجموع ۱۰ استاد زبان انگلیسی (۵ نفر ایرانی و ۵ نفر ترکی) در جلسه مصاحبه شرکت کردند تا به بررسی عمیق نگرش آن‌ها در پلتفرم های **Zoom** و **Adobe Connect** در مورد مسائل مربوط به مواد و منابع، آموزش و ارزیابی بپردازند. همانطور که نتایج مصاحبه نشان داد، اساتید دانشگاه های ترکیه و ایران، نظرات مشابهی در مورد پلتفرم های آنلاین داشتند و مزایایی مانند دسترسی آسان، جذابیت و کاربرد برای آموزش و یادگیری در کووید-۱۹ را برشمردند. همچنین از معایب کم بودن تعامل و ارتباط، بی انگیزگی برای فراگیران غیرمنضبط و غیره بود. به طور کلی، بر اساس دیدگاه شرکت کنندگان، هر دو پلتفرم آنلاین از نظر مواد و منابع و همچنین آموزش مفید بودند. با این حال، از نظر ارزیابی، کنترل کمتری بر تقلب در آزمون‌ها داشتند. احزاب مختلف مانند معلمان، طراحان برنامه درسی و توسعه‌دهندگان مواد از نتایج این مطالعه بهره مند خواهند شد.

کلمات کلیدی: ارزیابی، آموزش، مواد/منابع، بسترهای یادگیری مجازی

Introduction

Technology-based instruction today continues to experience an explosive growth rate. More researchers, practitioners, and institutions are getting on board in examining various technology-enhanced tools and their growth to overcome the demerits of traditional classrooms. This growth is not expected to slow down or drop off in the foreseeable future (Purwati, & Khairunisa, 2022). Since the beginning of the 21st century, digital multimodal instruction has gained ground and its potential for L2 teaching skills and sub-skills has been identified by different researchers (Huang, Kuo, & Chen, 2020; Sousa & Rocha, 2019; Warschauer, 2009). Over the past several decades, technology has become a fixture in many homes around the world. Its influence has permeated into all facets of life, including English language teaching. Nowadays, it is a common ground that teachers discuss via Twitter (Beach, 2017), WhatsApp (Cansoy, 2017), Facebook; (Kelly & Antonio, 2016; van Bommel, Liljekvist, & Olin-Scheller, 2018) and inform others via blogs and other platforms. In the educational field, this has also been evident; more and more schools and universities are using technological tools for students to work on different subjects or only as a matter of reinforcement for some topics (Dudeney & Hockly, 2012). As a matter of fact, digital learning created a huge transformation in the lives of both teachers and learners. According to Balaaco and Truscello (1996), digital learning is delivering knowledge "just in time" and on-demand when and where the employees need it. This concept of "anywhere-anytime" is serving learners on a larger scale. It is believed that many researchers have stated that infused learning of science and technology can enhance students' creativity, problem-solving skills, and interest in science fields (Perignat & Katz-Buonincontro, 2019; Thuneberg, Salmi, & Bogner, 2018).

In the big field of digital learning, virtual classrooms have gradually gained more importance. Conventionally, virtual classrooms were conceived of as "spaces" in which students could take classes synchronically through the use of certain software that allowed them to interact as they did in real classes, as well as asynchronously. Virtual classrooms have been spread all over the world by universities and other institutions that provide education to those who cannot attend traditional universities because of distance, time, or other factors (Hiltz, 1995); furthermore, they were inevitable during the COVID-19 pandemic (Burgin, Coli, & Daniel, 2022). It is important to remember that, despite potential difficulties, virtual classrooms potentially deliver flexibility for both professors and students as well as interactivities (Hasan & Khan, 2020; Leszczyski et al., 2018). Additionally, they foster strong collaboration between all parties involved by providing opportunities for mutual learning and assistance from peers (Doucet et al., 2020).

The field of education has been undoubtedly affected by virtual learning and teaching as well as research via online platforms (Yusuf, 2005) such as Zoom and Adobe Connect. Although a great number of theoretical and practical studies have been conducted in this area, many unexamined issues remain (O'Neill, Singh, & O'Donoghue, 2004). Also, the researchers found that although a significant number of studies have been carried out in the field of online education, very few comparative studies have been done to appraise the efficacy of different available online learning platforms in comparison to one another. Hence, the present study was an attempt to consider Iranian and Turkish EFL university professors' perceptions about the practicality of the virtual learning platforms they use, i.e. Adobe Connect and Zoom. In so doing, the university professors' views regarding the possible inadequacies of the systems were probed. The study was organized in three separate planes, the issues related to instruction, issues relevant to testing and evaluation, and issues concerning materials and resources.

Literature Review

The last ten years have seen an upsurge in resources and devices available for language learning and instruction thanks to advancements in computer technology. Virtual environments (VEs)

have played a significant role in the creation of language learning systems since the early 2000s. They can imitate real worlds and allow users to explore and travel at their leisure while receiving multimodal input in the form of visual, textual, and aural media (Tseng, Liou, & Chu, 2020). An early definition of virtual classrooms (sometimes referred to as virtual learning environments [VLEs]) comes from Britain and Liber (2004), who described VLEs as "learning management software systems that synthesize the functionality of computer-mediated communications software and online methods of delivering course materials" (p. 3). Virtual classrooms usually feature noticeboards for announcements, course outlines, in-system e-mail service, conferencing tools, class lists or student homepages, assignments, assessments, multimedia resources, file upload areas, a calendar, and a navigable interface. The components that make up virtual classrooms have improved considerably in the past decade due to the widespread availability of high-speed Internet access and support for video and audio interactivity (Britain & Liber, 2004; Vai & Sosulski, 2016).

Numerous researchers have advised using multimedia elements in second language instruction because it has been proven to be successful (e.g., Chen, Chen & Kinshuk, 2009). Because audio and visual flashcards, visual animations, and even the 3DVWs may give learners textual, graphical, and auditory input, multimedia software has been found to improve vocabulary learning (Lin, 2009). Dual Coding Theory (DCT) (Paivio, 1991), which depicts text processing as the development of two mental representations: the verbal and nonverbal system, which can explain the beneficial effects of multimedia input on language learning and acquisition. The knowledge that is coded in both systems will reinforce one another through referential linkages, resulting in better retention and recall than if the information is only coded in one system (Paivio, 1991). Mayer (1997) added DCT to the Generative Theory of Multimedia Learning (GTML) in order to account for the acquisition of a second language. Hong (2010) contends that the multimedia setting can aid in language learning by increasing learner interest, inspiring students, promoting learning autonomy, forming active and experiential learning styles, and enabling both technical and research abilities.

A few investigations have demonstrated the beneficial effects of virtual environments on learners' oral language skills in addition to improving interaction quality during practice (Canto, Jauregi, & van den Bergh, 2013; Lan, 2014). Moreover, some studies tried to take into account teachers' attitudes towards technology-based classrooms. For instance, Delli Carpini (2012) reported teacher knowledge, teacher skills, and teacher beliefs about the effectiveness of instructional technology and effective use of resources as the teachers' reasons for not implementing digital technology in their language instructions. She reported that teachers' beliefs played the most significant role in their decision-making process.

In the context of Iran, Tahriri, Azim Dokht, and Derakhshan (2013) performed research on Iranian teachers' attitudes towards computers. The findings indicated that teachers have positive attitudes towards computers in their teaching. In addition, Mollaei and Riasati (2013) performed a study about Iranian teachers' attitudes towards applying computers. The results represented that Iranian teachers have positive attitudes toward using a computer in their instruction. Sadeghi, Rahmany, and Doosti (2014) conducted a study and the findings showed that Iranian teachers who worked with computers more than other teachers had positive attitudes towards applying them in EFL classrooms. Pourhossein Gilakjani (2018) investigated teachers' views toward computer technology in teaching English pronunciation.

The findings showed teachers' interest in using computer technology because it provided them with an enjoyable and interactive environment, helped them obtain accurate pronunciation, and improved the quality of their pronunciation instruction. Regardless of the existence of some studies in the big field of virtual learning and online platforms, however, to the current researchers' best knowledge, there is a tangible paucity of studies in striving the perceptions of

Iranian and Turkish professors and their students on the status quo of Adobe Connect and Zoom platforms in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classes in Iran and Turkey in terms of instruction, evaluation, and issues concerning materials and resources, hence the current study aimed to niche this gap. In short, based on the objective of the study, the following research question was formulated:

RQ: What are Iranian and Turkish EFL university professors' perceptions of the merits and demerits of the current virtual learning platform regarding the issues related to instruction, resources, and assessment?

Method

Participants
The research sample was taken from two contexts of Iran and Turkey and from Iranian and Turkish professors. To deeply investigate the attitudes of Iranian and Turkish professors on the platforms of Zoom and Adobe Connect as regards issues related to materials and resources, instruction, and assessment, a total of 10 ELT professors (5 Iranian and 5 Turkish) participated in the interview session. The university teachers majoring in TEFL in Iran were from Urmia University, Urmia Azad University, Tabriz University, Shahid Madani University, and Tabriz Azad University. The university professors majoring in TEFL in Turkey were from different universities located in Istanbul, i.e. Istanbul Aydın University, Halıç University, Medipol University, and Hacettepe University. Out of 10 university professors, 4 of them were females, 2 from Iran and 2 from Turkey and the rests were male professors 3 from Turkey and 3 from Iran.

Design
The design of this study was qualitative in nature. To gather data, the attitudes of university teachers were the focus of the study and they were analyzed based on the details of qualitative data analysis and in terms of participants' experiences on two platforms Zoom and Adobe Connect. The required data for this study were gathered during the academic year 2021-2022.

Data Collection Procedure
In order to investigate the attitudes of Iranian and Turkish professors on the platforms of Zoom and Adobe Connect as regards issues related to materials and resources, instructional, and assessment, over a 3-month period, the researchers collected data using interviews. Aside from the demographic information, the interview consisted of 4 questions. The participants were asked to reflect on their overall perception of the instruction, such as whether they liked the class and recommended it to others or not. They were also required to give reasons for their answers. Besides, the participants were asked to share their ideas about the strengths and weaknesses of the instruction and suggest some ways to improve it. The interview questions were sent to the teachers via WhatsApp after first preparation by phone.

The method of analysis chosen for the interview section was the qualitative approach of thematic analysis, and it was reported in the form of extracts. After this process, the researchers analyzed the transcripts looking for brief trends and patterns. The data set to be analyzed by the researchers included all responses done by the teachers in both groups who participated in this stage of the study (i.e., semi-structured interviews). In order to analyze the interview results, thematic analysis was used. "Thematic analysis is a method for identifying, analyzing, and reporting patterns (themes) within data" (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 79). The thematic analysis includes familiarization with data, generating initial codes, searching for themes among codes, reviewing themes, defining and naming themes, and producing the final report (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

Data Analysis Procedure

The interview results were extracted and analyzed manually, and for the purpose of reliability, 20% of the data was rechecked and reanalyzed independently by a second colleague of the first researcher (a Ph.D. graduate of TEFL) who was informed about the purpose of the study by the researcher. The field of study of this expert was discourse analysis, and she was familiar with the data analysis phase. The second rater coded 20% of the data, taken randomly from the corpus, and finally, the inter-rater reliability was reported to be 0.85. As Dörnyei (2007) stated, data analysis is the most complex and mysterious of all the phases of a qualitative project and in order to generate findings that transform raw data into new knowledge, a qualitative researcher was engaged in active and demanding analytic processes throughout all phases of the research (Thorne, 2000). Since the current study was qualitative in nature, the researchers employed a thick description of transcriptions of semi-structured interviews during the data analysis phase.

Results

As already stated, the objective of the current study was to investigate the attitudes of the university professors in two contexts of Turkey and Iran on the platforms of Zoom and Adobe Connect as regards issues related to materials and resources, instruction, and assessment. To investigate the attitudes of the participants, a semi-structured interview was used. In terms of Adobe Connect and Zoom's usefulness (the first question of the interview), most of the interviewees (90%) believed that the websites were useful, especially in the Corona Virus pandemic. One Turkish professor, who already experienced different websites and virtual classrooms in other online courses, stated:

*Extract 1: Learning through Adobe Connect was useful due to its **flexible nature**, **convenience**, and **ease of use**. When I compare it with the other online websites, I can find it more **applicable to learners who want to increase their autonomy and self-regulation**.*

The other Turkish professor expressed her feeling toward this issue in the following way:

*Extract 2: Virtual classrooms are useful, as I experienced teaching using Adobe Connect. The reason is the fact that virtual classrooms are **learner-centered** and they involve students during the process of learning.*

Besides, one of the Iranian professors mentioned that,

*Extract 3: learning by Adobe Connect is **not instructor-led and monologues** with a screen-share and a webcam, all and all help the students to be autonomous.*

A minor group of university teachers in both contexts had negative perceptions of online platforms in general. A Turkish professor expressed his point of view as follows:

*Extract 4: I do not like online instruction via online platforms such as Adobe Connect or even Zoom since **traditional face-to-face classrooms are more attractive** to me. I hope this bad condition, I mean Corona Virus days, go away as fast as possible.*

However, one of the professors in Iran reported on the usefulness of Zoom:

*Extract 5: Zoom is a **thoughtfully designed website**. I enjoyed teaching using it since it **infuses interactivity to capture a learner's cognitive attention**.*

The other question of the interview was about recommending or not recommending using the virtual platforms (Zoom or Adobe Connect) and offering reasons for the most useful aspects of the website in terms of instruction, assessment, and materials/resources. All of the Iranian and Turkish professors, except 2 of them (one Iranian and one Turkish professor) recommended using the platforms. One of the Turkish professors recommended using Zoom in instruction:

*Extract 6: Since Zoom **enables smooth class size expansion and contraction**. Through the web interface, instructors may easily establish a link for each Zoom meeting, which they can subsequently distribute to their students. After installing Zoom on their computer, students merely*

*need to click the link to enter their online class at the designated time. **The ease of use and lack of cost are its main features.***

Another Iranian respondent suggested using virtual platforms because there is no other option during the Covid-19 period. He stated the following additional reasons:

*Extract 7: Zoom has a number of features that make teaching much easier and **keep the class on task**. First off, instructors can submit URLs, pictures, and documents in the chat feature for the benefit of the entire class to view in real-time. In addition, Zoom has a screen-sharing feature that lets instructors expose their desktops to the whole group of students. When I wanted the students in my writing class to concentrate on a certain passage that I had chosen for a particular lesson, I would use the screen share feature. Students may read along with me right away because screen share automatically projects onto their laptops. Even though they weren't in the same room as me, **these excellent features enabled pupils to stay on task**.*

The other Turkish professor advised against using online forums:

*Extract 8: because **only pupils who are exceptionally diligent may benefit from online platforms**. However, I do not advise using online platforms since, as instructors, we are aware of how disruptive technology can be for pupils. We are aware that this issue will persist for some time to come. We have no idea what everyone is doing because instructors cannot view their students' screens unless they share them with the class. As a result, distracted students are encouraged. For instance, I think some of my pupils may have opened other websites while we were in class. **Some students went so far as to turn off their cameras that all that was visible was a name projected onto a square of dark paper.** This issue caught me off guard, despite the fact that it was later fixed. Instructors may wish to reevaluate which pupils they teach via online platforms if distractions could easily derail the program.*

Another Turkish interviewee uttered:

*Extract 9: **Zoom enables seamless expansion and contraction of class sizes**. Simply establish a link through the web interface for each Zoom meeting, which instructors may then distribute to their students. Students can easily join their online classes at the scheduled time by clicking the link once Zoom has been installed on their computers. The best part is that **it is free and simple to use.***

Also, one of the Turkish interviewees recommended using virtual platforms as there is no choice in the Covid-19 era. He gave the other reasons as follows:

*Extract 10: Zoom has a number of features that **make teaching much easier and maintain class focus**. First off, the chat feature enables teachers to post URLs, images, and documents for the entire class to view in real-time. Additionally, Zoom offers a screen-share feature that enables teachers to show their desktops to the entire class. When I wanted the students in my writing class to concentrate on a particular passage that I had chosen for a given lesson, I would use the screen share feature. The kids could immediately follow along with me as I read because screen sharing automatically projected onto the laptops of the pupils.*

Even though they weren't in the same room as me, these ideal attributes enabled pupils to stay on task.

The other Turkish professor recommended not to use online platforms

*Extract 11: because **online platforms are useful just for extremely disciplined students**. However, I do not advise using online platforms since, as instructors, we are aware of how disruptive technology can be for pupils. We are aware that this issue will persist for some time to come. We have no idea what everyone is doing because instructors cannot view their students' screens unless they share them with the class. As a result, distracted students are encouraged. For instance, I think some of my pupils may have opened other websites while we were in class. **Some students went so far as to turn off their cameras that all that was visible was a name**

projected onto a square of dark paper. *This issue caught me off guard, despite the fact that it was later fixed. Instructors may wish to reevaluate the pupils they teach through online platforms if interruptions have the potential to easily disrupt the session.*

The third question of the interview was as follows:

What are the main strengths and weaknesses of the virtual platforms (Zoom or Adobe Connect) in terms of instruction, assessment, and materials/resources?

Surprisingly, all of the Iranian professors reported on the ***low speed of the internet in Iran***, which hinders the website's efficiency. They believed that low internet speed is the main disadvantage in all online classrooms. One of the professors reacted to this question as follows:

*Extract 12: I believed that instruction using Adobe Connect is not disadvantageous on its own, but the **low internet access** and speed in our country, unfortunately, **decreases the high effect of online classes**, namely Adobe Connect virtual classroom.*

One of the Turkish professors mentioned the ***low communication among friends*** as one of the downsides of the virtual platforms.

Extract 13: Because students do not have to be physically present in class, communicating with other learners may be difficult or almost impossible for them. For this reason, there is no synergy similar to face-to-face classes.

Another Turkish professor scrutinized the problems of virtual platforms as follows:

*Extract 14: In online education, the **student does not have a precise focus on the lesson** and the audience should only be interested in such distance learning and be able to act accordingly. **Less control of teachers over students** and the **elimination of face-to-face communication** and instruction are the other negative points of instruction via Adobe Connect or any online classroom. Some teachers and professors are unfamiliar with the online education system. For those who enjoy interacting with their classmates in face-to-face classes, face-to-face training is appropriate.*

In terms of the weakness of online platforms, the other Turkish professor mentioned that:

*Extract 15: Since students use computers and they are not monitored all the time, they can use the open space for **cheating in homework as well as tests**".*

Regarding the benefits of virtual platforms, university professors had different attitudes. The following extracts clarify the plus points of instruction through Adobe Connect and Zoom. One of Turkish professor stated that:

*Extract 16: Virtual (online) courses cost about one-fifth of the cost of face-to-face classes. For example, we are not obliged to give costs for dormitories or transportation, so the **low cost** of these courses is a great way to save and invest.*

One of the Iranian professors referred to teachers' and students' motivation while using online platforms. She pointed out:

*Extract 17: In my idea, online classes, especially Adobe Connect instruction **require a high level of motivation by both pupils and instructors to progress** in virtual courses. This type of training is very **ideal and unique for employed people** because these classes are recorded so students can download and view them whenever they want.*

The other Turkish instructor highlighted both advantages and disadvantages of online platforms:

*Extract 18: In addition to pupils, online tools like Adobe Connect are made to be useful for teachers. While **teachers can manage who enters the sessions and how much they participate through voice, video, chats, drawings, and annotations, they are limited in their ability to prevent assessment-related cheating.***

In like manner, one of the Iranian professors mentioned the weaknesses and strengths of the platform:

*Extract 19: Overall, I would think Zoom is far more advantageous than not. **It makes video conferencing simple for the typical user, increasing inclusivity for people who are remote from the teacher.** Teaching with Zoom can be a very useful tool for students all over the world, provided that teachers prepare for any potential technology challenges. However, in order to implement and design classes that optimize student involvement, teachers need to take the technological limitations of Zoom into consideration. Online lessons are likely to present some technical challenges for you. **Zoom's adaptability, nevertheless, keeps students' demands at the foreground.***

The last question of the open-ended questionnaire was as follows:

Can the virtual platforms (Zoom or Adobe Connect) improve EFL learners' knowledge of English skills and sub-skills? How?

In reaction to this question, one of the Turkish professors underscored the role of online platforms in long-term memory and believed:

*Extract 20: Since English is so volatile and it is forgotten during a short period of time without review, language learners should transfer language skills and sub-skills such as words to long-term memory. In my opinion, **virtual platforms, namely instruction via Zoom can be a solution since you can listen to the recorded files for time and improve your students' English learning**.*

Also, one of the Iranian professors believed that:

*Extract 21: Online platforms are useful for English learning. Consider for example new words. Memorizing words alone has no positive effect on learning them, but the instructor should teach them within sentences and repeat them for time to transfer their different meanings. Furthermore, **the context of the web assists students to review the activities**, which were done in the classroom, hence it can improve their vocabulary learning in particular.*

Finally, reviewing materials, one of the Turkish professors mentioned to the fun nature of online platforms as the other attracting point:

*Extract 22: In my idea, there is no 'one' best website or platform that you follow and learn all of English skills and sub-skills without difficulty, but learning via online platforms was excellent (even though it has its demerits) since **it helps students to review the newly learned materials** for times after class time. Learning English by Adobe Connect was excellent because you can store and practice English in your free time. Besides, the web context was the other good experience, and learning English via technology is **full of fun for young students**.*

To sum up, as the results of the interview showed, both Turkish and Iranian university professors had similar ideas about the online platforms and they listed some merits such as easy access, being attractive, applicability for teaching and learning in Covid-19, and so on. Also, the demerits were low interaction and communication, being demotivating for non-disciplined learners, and so on. In general, based on the participants' points of view, both online platforms were useful in terms of materials and resources as well as instruction; however, they had less control over cheating during the tests, in terms of assessment.

Discussion

As the results of the interview revealed, the Adobe Connect and Zoom platforms were generally helpful despite some demerits. Based on our interviews with university professors in two contexts of Turkey and Iran, the inefficiency of virtual tools and classrooms presents certain challenges to teachers and students in terms of mass media, suitable material, and the low speed of the internet (especially in Iran). In this study, we recognized that online platforms could be new experiences for both teachers and students, especially in promoting students' autonomy and self-dependence. Moreover, the reshaping of certain conventional and popular assumptions regarding the

usefulness of virtual classrooms was considered an enormous challenge, as evidenced by extracts (e.g., *there is no synergy similar to face-to-face classes, **and** I do not like online instruction*, …). However, as it was evident from the qualitative results, Adobe Connect and Zoom had less control over the assessment factor in compassion with the resources, materials, and instruction.

As the findings showed, most of the university professors, regardless of context, preferred online classrooms over the traditional ones as they can be considered a sort of panacea for the Coronavirus pandemic and they can improve learners' autonomy and self-regulation. The findings of this study are consistent with those of other studies that found that technologically improved learning settings are preferable to those without these elements. (e.g. Sadeghi & Khanahmadi, 2011; Şendurur & Yildirim, 2018; Wang, 2008). Orhan (2007) implied that traditional learning environments do not prepare for the high-quality learning. Given the potential for allowing students to progress through the program at their own pace, instruction delivered through online platforms can be advantageous over traditional environments.

Given that individuals can manage their own learning process and improve retention through recorded classes, students can take control of their education by using a web-integrated or blended learning atmosphere (Hodges, 2005).

Previous studies had endorsed the success of online education, finding that students who took part in web-integrated classes often fared better academically and retained more of the information they had learned (Coetzee et al., 2014; Yukselturk, 2010). Since students who learn in a web-based environment with positive attitudes toward independent learning become more responsible for their own learning, more intrinsically oriented, and more challengeable, autonomy or independent learning component is mentioned as an important element for web-based learners. They can also actively control their intellect, motivation, or conduct, which helps them accomplish their objectives and perform better (Broadbent, 2017). Students do better while studying a second language like English in a web-integrated/blended educational setting since it emphasizes the learner's autonomy. The findings are somewhat comparable to those of a more recent study by Burgin et al. (2022), which sought to understand how COVID-19 affected teaching in upper secondary schools by looking at how Cambodian teachers perceived online instruction. The focus was on instructors' attitudes toward online learning, which was essential during Corona Virus, similar to the current study. Through online semi-structured interviews with 29 teachers and their school administrators, researchers examined how teachers' current demands and challenges would affect their teaching practices in the future. Researchers discovered that rather than restricting digital knowledge and skills, the COVID-19 epidemic decreased the quality of teaching and learning because of the core knowledge of monitoring students

Despite the fact that the learning is online, classroom management is still necessary. The experimental indications point to this influence in the scientific fields, particularly in those that deal with calculations. COVID-19, on the other hand, was seen as offering secondary education a lot for implementing the digital revolution of education 4.0 and producing some practical problems for policymakers and implementers. Based on the attitudes of the participants in the study, it can be deduced that although online learning environments and platforms like Zoom presented some difficulties and challenges for teaching and learning, they also had some advantages because they allowed teachers to instruct, interact with, and reinforce students' learning while working from home (Surkhali & Garbuja, 2020). To summarize, it could be very beneficial to understand the potential of various learning settings and how to use modern technologies to encourage students' independent learning. The information would be influential and applicable to teachers and stakeholders to equip learning environments with new tools and appropriate online platforms such as Adobe Connect and Zoom to take into account the issues related to assessment, resources and materials, and instruction. Consequently, learners would

become autonomous and responsible in their learning. Online learning is only one contributing factor among a myriad of other pivotal factors.

Conclusions

As stated, the results of qualitative data analysis showed Turkish and Iranian university professors' satisfaction with the online platforms in terms of assessment, resources and materials, and instruction. As the findings showed Turkish and Iranian university professors had similar ideas about the online platforms and they listed some advantages and disadvantages of both virtual platforms of Zoom and Adobe Connect. The findings of the current study include a number of implications for learning as well as teaching English. The results of the current study have consequences for EFL students since they allow them to experiment with a variety of teaching scenarios and online learning environments, such as Zoom and Adobe Connect, in place of more conventional ways of instruction. Virtual platforms and computer-based teaching environments enable the teacher and student to give a secure approach to finding underlying causes for troubling difficulties connected to assessment, resources and materials, and instruction because there is no "one-size-fits-all" manner of education. Teachers can be taught how to use computer-mediated education by using Adobe Connect and Zoom in the classroom, and teacher trainers can encourage them to emphasize this tactic more in addition to other training initiatives.

It is advised that in the future, researchers attempt to study the consistency of findings over an extended period (Example: many years of academic achievement in ESP classes) and in other areas. A vast and comprehensive study area based on the Adobe Connect and Zoom virtual platforms would allow for the expansion of valid comparisons between curricula. The ideal options would be Adobe Connect and Zoom platforms, not just in English classes but in other majors and areas as well. In conclusion, it is very important to understand the potential of various learning settings and how to incorporate new technologies in a technology-enhanced environment to support students' independent learning.

In order to provide learning environments with new tools and new instruction via virtual platforms that would help foster the crucial quality of autonomy in students and make them more independent and responsible in their own learning, the information obtained would be impactful and relevant to educators and stakeholders. Finally, it can be concluded that if the available virtual learning platforms are directed at the right level, they can assist students to perceive, involve, or create effective strategies to process the information intended to be autonomous learners.

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Biodata

Shahin Akbarzadeh is a Ph.D. candidate at Urmia University in TEFL. She has been researching different areas of teaching and she is interested in discourse analysis and culture-based studies.

Email: *shirin_akbarzadeh@yahoo.com*

Parviz Alvinia is a full-time academic member of the department of English language at Urmia University. He has been researching different properties of academic discourses and teaching strategies for approximately two decades and has published a bulk of articles in prestigious national and international academic journals.

Email: *p.alavinia@urmia.ac.ir*

Mehdi Sarkhosh is a full-time academic member of the department of English language at Urmia University. He has been researching in different fields such as testing and assessment and other fields and he has published a number of articles in academic journals.
Email: *mdsarkhosh@gmail.com*