A study on language teachers’ preparedness to use technology during COVID-19

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Abstract: Although the Covid-19 pandemic, has affected all aspects of human life, including education worldwide, technology has provided an opportunity for teachers to replace their classroom-based education and face-to-face learning with digital modes of online teaching and learning. With the paradigm shift in education, the present study adopted a descriptive research design that involved the analysis of quantitative data, investigated the preparedness, attitudes, beliefs and difficulties of 452 English language teachers from India and Afghanistan towards various ways of using technology for language teaching. A questionnaire with 23 items on Likert scale and open-ended questions was shared online with the teacher respondents to collect data. The findings revealed that lack of technological tools, low parental support for active participation of students, time taken to adopt technical tools to virtual mode of teaching and sudden paradigm shift without systematic training, little time space to adapt to the paradigm shift, planning, and executing classes were among the challenges that teachers faced while using technology in their classes during the Covid-19 pandemic. The study suggested some pedagogical implications and information for further studies.

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PUBLIC INTEREST STATEMENT
The Covid-19 pandemic compelled teachers to adopt technology for teaching and learning purposes which is a sudden paradigm shift from face to face teaching to teaching online. This lays a great responsibility on teachers to have sufficient technical knowledge, positive attitude and teaching skills to prepare and use technology to continue teaching. It is for this reason that the researchers tried to understand the perceptions and preparedness of Indian and Afghan English language teachers about the use of technology as a tool for teaching English online during Covid-19. The findings showed that the teachers have positive attitude towards use of technology in the form of gadgets and digital tools for teaching-learning purposes. The challenges of digital divide and expertise in using technology had implications for teacher educations and educational institutions. The findings are of a great interest not only for current scenario of English language teaching-learning, but also a prelude to what language teaching will be like in the future.
Subjects: Information & Communication Technology; ICT; Technology; ICT; Visual Communication; Open & Distance Education and eLearning; Teachers & Teacher Education; Language & Linguistics; Language Teaching & Learning;

Keywords: Use of technology; Covid-19; teachers’ preparedness; attitudes; beliefs; online teaching and learning

1. Introduction
With the spread of Coronavirus (i.e., Covid-19) across the world, one of the fields that has seriously been affected is education. Educational institutions, which are places of larger gatherings and have scope for Covid-19 spread, have decided on a long-term shutdown. However, the shutdown of educational institutions did not mean restraining from the teaching and learning processes. In other words, schools and universities are closed, but education and learning are not. This forced the schools, colleges, and universities to adopt an alternative to continue education with the main focus on teaching and learning through the use of technology, internet, and virtual classrooms (Huang et al., 2020). The Covid-19 spread controlling efforts did not stop educational activities under any circumstances. In the prevailing conditions, educational institutions had to resort to a paradigm shift from face to face to the use of technology. This helped learners to continue learning while institutions remained closed. With the help of software tools and Information and Communication Technology (ICT) devices (Beri & Sharma, 2019), educational sector is able to provide opportunities for the educators, including English language teachers, to continue teaching virtually. However, the success of teachers’ language teaching with technology relies vastly on teachers’ attitudes and willingness to use technology (Rana, 2012) in this sensitive Covid-19 pandemic situation.

According to Ko and Rossen (2017), the use of technology for online teaching and learning is no longer a novelty. Today, almost all educational institutions, as well as teachers and students around the world experience online education. It is revealed in many studies that teachers have a positive attitude towards the use of technology in their teaching (e.g., Al-Mekhlafi, 2020; Beri & Sharma, 2019; Islahi & Nasrin, 2019; Mwila, 2018; Rana, 2012). Moreover, MOOCs have become a prominent mode of updating one’s knowledge in specialized areas from experts around the globe and are the norm of the day. Blended and flipped classrooms have already found their ways into language classrooms. However, setting up online language courses as part of Higher Secondary school or Under-Graduation or Post-Graduation programs, effective ways of using technology to teach the courses, arranging exercises and tests, and online assessment are some of the challenges that teachers and students are facing at the moment. The teaching and learning strategies for an online classroom are deviant from a traditional classroom as the physical absence of teachers and students, their expressions, gestures, and tones have reduced interaction and communication between teachers and students in a classroom (Ko & Rossen, 2017).

2. Research questions
Due to the spread of Covid-19 and the consecutive lockdowns of educational institutions, a steady interest of English language teachers concerning the ways of using technology for language teaching has increased. The objectives of this study are:

(a) identifying possible ways of using technology for effective language teaching;
(b) understanding attitudes and beliefs of the English language teachers about the advantages of using technology for language teaching; and
(c) identifying the major problems of teachers while teaching the English language online.

Therefore, this study attempts to contribute to the understanding of English language teachers’ attitudes and preparedness towards the use of technology in teaching language and the paradigm shift from face-to-face mode to virtual teaching.
The study addresses the following research questions:

(1) What are the possible ways of using technology for English language teaching during the pandemic?

(2) What are the attitudes and beliefs of teachers (specifically from India and Afghanistan) about the advantages of using technology for English language teaching?

(3) What are the major problems and challenges ESL/EFL teachers face while teaching online because of the sudden paradigm shift?

3. Literature review

3.1. Online language teaching and learning

A virtual learning environment (VLE) in educational technology is a web-based platform for the digital aspects of courses of study, usually within educational institutions. They present resources, activities, and interactions within a course structure and provide for the different stages of assessment (URL, 2021). Virtual online or distance teaching and learning are used synonymously that comply with the above definition. Teachers and students are not physically present at the same place, at the same time in a classroom, but the materials and learning contents are shared and lessons are delivered to the students through digital tools and platforms such as audio files, videos, Internet, and telephonic communication, chats, etc. (Biner et al., 1994).

In the present pandemic time teaching online has become inevitable to the problems caused due to closure of the educational institutions. However, there are many studies and academicians that supported use of technology for education. Delwiche and Henderson as cited in Inuma (2016:18) reflected on the use of technology and the emergence of social networking for teaching-learning purposes. It can be understood that there is a gradual rise in the use of technology which can be divided into four stages (i.e., from 1985 to 2011). According to Delwiche and Henderson, the first stage was 1985–1993, when the world communication formation developed and the ARPAANET emerged. The second stage was the age of ‘Amazon (1994), Yahoo (1994), web-based electronic mail (1994), eBay (1995), and Google (1996) and they all emerged during 1994–1998. The third stage was 1999–2004, when “Blogger (1999), MySpace (2003), Flickr (2004), and Facebook (2004)” came into existence, and the last stage was 2005 to 2011, when ‘YouTube (2005), iPhone (2007), iPad (2010) and broadband Internet connections were introduced in the market as well as in the field of education.

In their book, “Web 2.0: New tools, new schools”, Solomon and Schrum (2007) explained that smartphone applications allow for creating channels of communication between teachers and students. They described that WhatsApp chatting is one way to communicate with groups of students and teach them language. By using WhatsApp, they believe teachers exchange messages with students and she/he offers them fresh insight to foster their language knowledge and skills. According to Simonson et al. (2011:132), there are several “golden rules” for the use of technology in education and at least two of those rules are very essential in developing language teaching: (a) “Using many technologies makes the design more complex and expensive; therefore, limit the range of technologies in a given circumstance”, and (b) “How and what we want the learners to learn is the issue and technology is a tool.” They suggest that “distance education is an effective method for teaching and learning” (p. 139) and the use of technology accelerate the process.

Shyamlee (2012) analyzed several features of Internet and technology use and she pointed out that the use of technology promotes teachers’ teaching methodologies and students’ interest in language learning. It promotes their communication capacity as well as teaching resulting in interaction between teachers and students.
According to Murray (2014, February 19), there are five major advantages of using technology for education:

(a) Technology allows students to demonstrate independence;
(b) It gives chance for the teachers to differentiate the needs of students;
(c) It deepens learning by using resources that students are interested in;
(d) It gives students an equal voice; and
(e) It enables students to build strong content knowledge wherever they find it.

Huang et al. (2019:110) listed “Facebook, Friendster, LinkedIn, MySpace, Ning, Twitter, and WeChat” as some of the most influential online social communication platforms and apps that are used by the teachers while exchanging words with groups of students. They divided educational technologies into four categories such as (a) “learning tools”, (b) “educational resources”, (c) “learning environments”, and (d) “learning methods”. “Learning tools”, refer to electronic web pages such as blogs, electronic dictionaries, Web 2.0 tools, mobile apps, etc., that facilitate interactions between teachers, students, in a virtual learning environment. By “educational resources”, they refer to the use of teaching and learning materials that are available in online libraries, MOOCs, free online educational resources, etc. By “learning environments”, they indicate virtual classrooms, teaching and learning in cyberspace, etc. and by “learning methods”, they suggest “drill and practice, memorization, inquiry-based learning, collaborative learning, competency-based learning, and so on” (p. 96).

There are several ways of using ICT to teach English and conduct online classes. Some of the popularly used apps and tools are social platforms like WhatsApp, Facebook, Instagram, Telegram, etc.; open Learning Management Systems such as Google Sites, Google Classroom, Moodle, MS Teams Classroom, and Canvas and; virtual meeting platforms such as Google Meet, WeChat, Zoom, Goto Meeting, (Alsaleem, 2013; Huang et al., 2019; Huang et al., 2020; Mofareh, 2019; Shyamlee, 2012; Simonson et al., 2011). The LMS, tools, and apps are used for teaching communication and writing skills, carrying out research studies as well as teaching content that requires less face-to-face interaction (Shyamlee, 2012). There are hundreds of other online and offline Web 2.0 interactive tools that are used by teachers and educational experts to engage English language learners in the process of language learning.

Information and Communication Technology (ICT) has provided many learning platforms and ways to assess students’ achievement. Some of the most frequently use interactive web tools are Padlet, Answer Garden, Google Forms, Kahoot, ClassMarker, Quizlet, etc. These tools not only help and support teachers to grade and give feedback to students but also help them engage students to be active in a virtual classroom (Huang et al., 2020; Ko & Rossen, 2017).

3.2. Use of technology for English language teaching in India and Afghanistan
Online teaching is not only controlling the processes of teaching and learning, but is also filling the leisure time of the learners by providing access to diverse content, projects, and assignments online. The educational instructions’ efforts enable language teachers, students as well as parents to get connected with scholars and academicians from higher educational institutions. A wide practice of using television channels (E.g.: Ekalavya & Swayam Prabha Group of channels in India and Educational Radio & Television in Afghanistan) to teach school children are helping in preventing the sluggishness of children and teenagers during the Covid-19 pandemic.

The platforms provided by the Indian ministry of education (e.g., SWAYAM and NPTEL by Indians) include video lessons on all subjects at all levels, the English language being no exception. Teachers are encouraged to create videos and upload their lessons on those platforms with financial support given by the government. Teacher’s manuals and students’ textbooks are uploaded on the platforms so that both teachers and students can easily get access to them.
anytime and anywhere. The majority of language teachers recorded videos from their daily classes and shared them with their students through these platforms as well as youtube channels. Students were asked to follow their lessons on the website or TV/youtube channels. The Afghan MoHE has designed a Moodle called Higher Education Learning Management System (HELMS) particularly for use during the pandemic lockdown. On this system, the details of the universities, names of the faculties and departments, names of the professors, lists of all the topics they teach in a course, names of the subjects, number of credits, and names of students registering in each course are recorded. On the official inauguration of HELMS, the Afghan President on 23 April 2020, said that “so far, 38 public universities and 11 private universities and a total of 147,589 students have been registered in the HELMS, and the process will continue, with all universities soon to use the system" (URL).

From the many dominant online tools, “Afghan youths spend on an average 2–3 hours of their time on Facebook every day” (Orfan, 2021: 21) which is not very different from the time Indian youth spend on social platforms like WhatsApp, Facebook, Twitter or Instagram. This time and platforms are not explored to turn more productive for language teaching-learning purposes.

3.3. Teachers’ attitudes and beliefs towards the ways of using technology in the teaching process
Teachers’ attitudes and beliefs towards the use of technology play a key role in the success of online language teaching. If teachers carry a positive attitude towards the use of ICT tools in their daily teaching practices, schools with adequate technology tools can expand realms of education (Sánchez & Alemdin, 2011). Teachers’ attitudes and beliefs towards the ways of using technology have a great influence on the effectiveness of their teaching (Teo et al., 2008). Some teachers believe that the use of technology creates many opportunities for them to teach, provide flexible course content and interact with their students online. They think the loss of time with online classes is very low as there is no need for their physical presence and movement in the classroom (Shyamlee, 2012).

Previous studies conducted on the attitude of teachers towards use of technology for language teaching in different countries, including India evidenced a positive attitude towards various ways of using technology in classrooms (Beri & Sharma, 2019; Karakaya, 2010; Kaur, 2019; Mwila, 2018; Rana, 2012; Sadik, 2006). For example, Karakaya (2010) studied Turkish public schools' English language teachers’ attitudes towards using technology in language teaching and he reported that nearly all teachers showed a positive attitude towards using computers and integrating technology in English language classrooms. He also reported that these teachers faced difficulties when trying to integrate technology into their teaching. A similar study was carried out by Sadik (2006) in Egypt to find the attitude of teachers towards using computers and technology in English language classrooms. The findings showed that the majority of teachers had positive attitudes towards integrating technology in their classrooms and teachers who had computers experience had positive attitudes toward using them in their classes. In a very recent study conducted in the Yemeni context, Al-Mekhlafi (2020) found that EFL university students held a favorable attitude towards using Google Classroom, mobile phones, and computers as learning tools for their learning.

Similarly, some studies in India found that most Indian school teachers feel very much positive about the use of technology in their teaching and learning and they are enthusiastic about various ways of using ICT tools and devices in their classrooms (Beri & Sharma, 2019; Islahi & Nasrin, 2019; Kaur, 2019; Rana, 2012). However, lack of ICT resources, the experience of using technology, training opportunities, Internet and technical problems, etc. strongly influence the success of technology use in teachers’ instruction process (Beri & Sharma, 2019; Kaur, 2019).

Nevertheless, these positive beliefs and attitudes of the language teachers unfortunately did not make them prepared for a sudden paradigm shift. Neither the teachers and learners nor the
governments and educational institutions are fully equipped or prepared for this shift or change in the mode of teaching-learning. In other words, they did not have enough technical knowledge to use web tools or gadgets for teaching that can help them carry on their teaching task effectively. Hence this study intended to explore the preparedness for the shift and the strategies adopted by the teachers to cope with the demands of the social conditions during the pandemic.

4. Methodology

4.1. Research design
The present study followed a quantitative research paradigm in collecting and analyzing the data. It sought to find out answers to the research questions and understand the problems of teachers in the process of sudden paradigm shift immediately after outbreak of the pandemic. The study adopted a descriptive research design with a quantitative data analysis.

4.2. Data collection tool
A self-developed questionnaire was used for data collection. It consisted of 23 Likert scale items (i.e., not at all likely—very much likely, and strongly disagree—strongly agree) and two open-ended questions. The questionnaire was divided into four parts. The first part was intended to collect the participants' profiles to confirm that the participants are English language teachers, with the place they teach at and the number of years of their teaching experience. Part two discusses how they used technology for language teaching before the pandemic. This part also has an open-ended question in addition to the Likert scale statements. Part three intended to understand the attitudes and beliefs about the advantages of using technology to teach language, and part four focused on major problems they anticipate in teaching online/virtually. The responses were sought through open-ended questions.

The instrument was validated by pilot testing it with nine English language teachers who had used technology in their instruction from the beginning of educational institutions’ shutdown. These teachers were later part of the participants and their responses were included in this study. Their responses resulted in no modifications or changes to the questionnaire protocol. The questionnaire was shared with them as a Google form. The teachers were chosen randomly.

To check the reliability of items as well as the internal consistency of the data in the questionnaire, a Cronbach Alpha Coefficient was run. The result obtained from the questionnaire was a score of .728 indicating significant internal consistency between the items (Kline, 1999; Nunnally & Bernstein, 1994).

4.3. Sampling techniques
A random sampling technique was used to collect the data from 452 English language teachers from India and Afghanistan of various schools, colleges, and institutions. The main reason for using a random sampling technique was to select a representative number of the larger community so that the conclusions drawn from the study can be generalized without any bias. Therefore, this technique facilitated the researchers to collect original data utilizing a probability or randomized sample from the teachers of both countries.

4.4. Data analysis procedures
Based on the study’s research design, the soft copy of the questionnaire was administered to English language teachers in various Afghan and Indian schools, colleges, and institutions. The questionnaire was shared as a Google form and it was shared with the respondents in August 2020. Each group of respondents was given a maximum time of three days to submit the completed questionnaire. 475 respondents completed the questionnaires and returned them to the researchers and only 452 questionnaires were sorted out as valid data for the present study; 23 of them were considered invalid as about 15 of them were filled by teachers of other subjects and 8 of them were inconsistent in the responses.
After the completion of the data collection, the Likert scale responses for part-II items were divided into two categories: 1–3 points on the Likert scale are interpreted as Not at all Likely and 4–7 Very much likely (Appendix A Part-A) and the data was analyzed accordingly. Similarly, the data on Likert scale items for Part-III with 5 point scale is divided into two categories where 1 – 2 are considered as disagree and 3–5 as agree. A descriptive statistical analysis was run for all items of the questionnaire, using the Statistical Package of Social Sciences (SPSS 20.0). The data were then analyzed in two steps. In step one, the statistical data were analyzed through the use of descriptive statistics: standard deviations, frequency, and percentages. In step two, since the questionnaire contained two open-ended questions, the qualitative data was hand-coded and thematically analyzed.

4.5. Data analyses

4.5.1. Part-I
15 out of 452 (or 3%) of the respondents had a Ph.D., 216 out 452 (or 47%) of them had an M.A., and 221 out of 452 (or 49%) had a B.A with a B.Ed. in English. The respondents’ age groups fell between 20 and 45 and all of them taught English in various class levels from one to sixteen years. However, this information was not used for this study as that did not help in achieving the aim of it.

4.5.2. Part-II
The prime objective of collecting data in this part is to understand the familiarity with the use of technology for language teaching-learning purposes in the pre-pandemic times. As it can be inferred from Table 1, an overall mean score of M = 5.67; SD = 1.84 the respondents have a positive attitude towards using technology for the teaching of English language. The results indicate that respondents to a great extent agreed to most of the reasons for using technology to teach language. Item number 4 (i.e., “though not an expert, I keep learning as and when required”) gained the highest mean score of M = 6.95 with minimal SD = 1.33, and item number 7 (i.e., “I have no knowledge of technology”) gained the lowest mean score of M = 3.16, with highest SD = 2.41. The results indicate that respondents were not very much familiar with ways of using technology,

| No | Items                                                                 | Min | Max | Mean | SD  |
|----|-----------------------------------------------------------------------|-----|-----|------|-----|
| 1  | I use technology only as a teaching aid: LCD Projector, Bluetooth Speakers, Smartboards, etc. | 1.00 | 7.00 | 6.00 | 1.87 |
| 2  | I blend technology to supplement materials                           | 1.00 | 7.00 | 6.21 | 1.74 |
| 3  | I am familiar with a couple of tools but have not really used them   | 1.00 | 7.00 | 5.12 | 2.21 |
| 4  | Though not an expert, I keep learning as and when required           | 1.00 | 7.00 | 6.95 | 1.33 |
| 5  | I have learnt a few tools during the Covid-19 lockdown                | 1.00 | 7.00 | 6.65 | 1.66 |
| 6  | I am very good at teaching online                                   | 1.00 | 7.00 | 5.63 | 1.67 |
| 7  | I have no knowledge of technology                                   | 1.00 | 7.00 | 3.16 | 2.41 |
| Overall |                                                                  | 1.00 | 7.00 | 5.67 | 1.84 |

* N = Number of respondents, ** Min = Not at all likely = 1, *** Mean = Very much likely = 7, **** SD = Standard Deviation.
but the mean score from item number 4—“I have learnt a few tools during Covid-19 lockdown”—(M = 6.65, SD = 1.33) showed respondents were highly interested to learn technological tools and ways of using it in their online teaching as and when required.

The rest of the responses for the items indicate that respondents not only knew how to use technology for teaching language but they also believed that they could learn and use technological tools as and when required.

In searching for in-depth information about the other possible ways of using technology for language teaching, respondents were provided an option to respond to an open-ended question at the end of the second part of the questionnaire. 281 respondents answered the question and they wrote about the purposes of using digital tools in their teaching prior to the pandemic. The data obtained from the question were thematically analyzed.

As it can be seen in Figure 1, less than half of the respondents (40%) had used Google Classroom and Google meet in their teaching for LMS to reach out to students. It was revealed that 49% of the teachers had used gadgets as teaching aids to teach language. Detailed categorization showed that 31% of them use mobile phones and mobile-related applications, 18% of them use LCD and smart TV to teach English language to their students. A good number of respondents (i.e., 24%) shared their experiences of preparing video lessons using computers and smartphones and they shared the video lessons with their students through certain apps/LMS schools and colleges designed for them. About 39% of the respondents mentioned that they use some ICT tools, Web 2.0 tools, etc of which 21% mentioned that they use tools like Kahoot to make their classes interesting as well as assess their learning. Some respondents (i.e., 19%—21%) reported that they had used Zoom and YouTube for teaching English language to their students.

This part of the data also revealed the teachers are not sure of the difference between an LMS and digital tools or electronic gadgets or virtual meeting tools and so clubbed Google meet with Google class and Kahoot with Edmodo. The same had to be presented here while analyzing this part of the data.

4.5.3. Part-III
This part of the data aimed at understanding the teachers’ attitudes and beliefs in using technology to teach language. Table 2 presents the results:

Table 2 shows the teachers’ answers to the questionnaire items related to beliefs and attitudes about the advantages of using technology for language teaching. Item number 8 (F = 355, P = 79%) and item number 3 (F = 321, P = 71%) reflect noticeably the highest agreement level among respondents. These findings suggest that the respondents were likely to confirm the idea that the use of technology has many advantages for them while they were teaching English language online. The findings also match with item number 2 results, as the majority of respondents (F = 318, P = 70%) agreed that use of
Table 2. Frequency and percentages of respondents’ beliefs about the advantages of using technology to teach language

| No | Items                                                                 | N   | Agree | Disagree |
|----|-----------------------------------------------------------------------|-----|-------|----------|
|    |                                                                       |     | F     | %        | F        | %        |
| 1  | Makes classes more interesting                                        | 452 | 305   | 67%      | 147      | 33%      |
| 2  | Easy to use different types of materials                               | 452 | 318   | 70%      | 134      | 30%      |
| 3  | Allows learning at students' own convenient pace and time              | 452 | 321   | 71%      | 131      | 29%      |
| 4  | I can teach from wherever I am                                         | 452 | 305   | 67%      | 147      | 33%      |
| 5  | Students have access to better language                                | 452 | 207   | 46%      | 245      | 54%      |
| 6  | Parents can also take an active role in the learning process          | 452 | 229   | 51%      | 223      | 49%      |
| 7  | Fewer cases of abuse                                                  | 452 | 295   | 65%      | 157      | 35%      |
| 8  | Expertise from anywhere in the world is accessible                     | 452 | 355   | 79%      | 97       | 21%      |

* F = Frequency, **% = percentage (P), *** N = Number of respondents.

technology is easy for them to use for designing different types of materials (audio, video and other visuals) for their classes. A good number of respondents (F = 295, P = 65%) thought that using technology for teaching language benefits teachers and their students to experience “fewer cases of abuse” in their classes (item number 7).

Although respondents exhibited favorable attitudes toward items number 1 and 4 (F = 305, P = 67%), the lowest agreement level among eight items of this part of the questionnaire goes to item 5 (“Students have access to better language”) The teachers are not ready to accept that there are better sources of learning other than themselves. Item 6 (“Parents can also take an active role in the learning process”) with estimated frequencies and percentages of (F = 207, P = 46% and F = 229, P = 51% respectively) clearly reflects the preparedness for complete virtual mode teaching where the student learns from home being with her/his parents.

4.5.4. Part-IV

In Table 3, the respondents were asked to choose the major problems they faced due to paradigm shift from face-to-face teaching to teaching virtually using technical gadgets and digital tools. The results showed that teachers were very empathetic towards their students (attitude of teachers towards their students) and so the majority of the respondents (i.e., 350 out of 452 or 77%) believed that teaching online brings to light the “Twice deprived/disadvantaged students in the class” (item number 6). About 65% or 293 out of 452 respondents felt that teaching online did not really motivate their students (item number 7). It also indicates that teachers are not very familiar with digital tools that can cognitively engage their students in the language learning process despite the class being virtual, resulting in blaming their students that they are “Not enough motivated students”. Moreover, they confirmed that they “Do not know how to engage the students in online sessions” (item number 8).
| No | Items                                                                 | N     | Agree | Disagree |
|----|----------------------------------------------------------------------|-------|-------|----------|
|    |                                                                      |       | F     | %        | F       | %        |
| 1  | Longer time for planning and execution                              | 452   | 318   | 70       | 134     | 30       |
| 2  | Not used to handling Ed-tech tools, hence faced with challenges      | 452   | 267   | 59       | 185     | 41       |
| 3  | It is time-consuming to achieve expertise in using digital tools to teach the concept/content | 452   | 300   | 66       | 152     | 34       |
| 4  | Not sure if my students are the real respondent to my assignments and quizzes | 452   | 255   | 56       | 197     | 44       |
| 5  | Assessment takes up more time                                       | 452   | 260   | 58       | 192     | 42       |
| 6  | Twice deprived/disadvantaged students in the class                  | 452   | 350   | 77       | 102     | 23       |
| 7  | Not enough motivated students                                       | 452   | 293   | 65       | 159     | 35       |
| 8  | Do not know how to engage the students in online sessions            | 452   | 206   | 46       | 246     | 54       |

* F = Frequency, ** N = Number of respondents.

The next major problem respondents faced while teaching online was item number 1, as 318 out of 452 (or 70% of) respondents pointed out that teaching online takes “Longer time for planning and execution”. Similarly, 300 out of 452 (or 66% of) respondents agreed that teaching online is “Time-consuming to achieve expertise in using digital tools to teach the concept/content” (item number 3). The results suggest that online teaching really takes much of English language teachers, specifically those who did not use technology for their teaching before or they try technological tools for the first time. This is very much clear as the findings from item number 2, as 267 out of 452 (or 59% of) respondents agreed that they were “Not used to handling Ed-tech tools, hence they were faced with challenges” in their online class.

Regarding students’ assessment in online classes, 255 out of 452 (or 56%) respondents agreed that they were not sure if their students had been the real respondents to the assignments and quizzes they assigned to while teaching online (item number 4). Similarly, 260 out of 452 (or 58% of) respondents confirmed that “Assessment takes up more time” while teaching online (item number 5). The results indicate that assessment in online classes is another major challenge for the teachers who participated in this study.

To get in-depth information about the respondents’ attitudes and beliefs about the use of technology and the challenges of online language teaching, an open-ended question was stated
in the last part of the questionnaire. Two hundred and ninety seven respondents provided answers to the question. The data obtained from the question were clustered into nine categories and then they were thematically analyzed (See Figure 2).

Figure 2 that less than half of the respondents (38%) believe that “teaching language with technology is very fruitful” and 32% of them feel that the “use of technology encourages learner autonomy”. These findings indicate that more than one third of the respondents showed a positive attitude toward using technology in their classes. About 20% of the respondents thought that online “classes produce learning opportunities for both teachers and students” and more than one fifth of them (21%) responded that there is “no substitute for blended/virtual teaching/learning method during the Covid-19 pandemic”. A small number of respondents (i.e., 16%) commented that the “use of technology promotes creativity and innovation in teachers”. With regard to the role of teachers, classrooms, and the use of technology, more than one third of the respondents (i.e., 33%) believed that virtual classrooms do not replace traditional teaching. The finding is beyond doubt similar to Sloan’s statement, “learning in virtual space will never be able to replace completely teaching in real spaces” (as cited in Simonson et al., 2011, p. 134).

Quite similar to what was found in Tables 3, 26% of the respondents commented that teaching online is challenging and assessment is very difficult and roughly 29% of the respondents pointed out that due to the lack of full support from students’ parents and families, the active participation of students in their classes is a major issue in their classes. It could be due to these challenges that a very small number of respondents (6%) mentioned that Ed Tech tools have to be introduced to the students as well as to their parents.

5. Discussion
We all know that the teaching and learning during the Covid-19 pandemic has heavily relied on the use of technology. Most technical tools and devices were used by teachers and students from their homes or from their residences at whatever time. Bearing these in mind, the aim of this study was to find out teachers’ attitudes and beliefs about the advantages of using technology for language teaching, and the major challenges English language teachers experienced during the paradigm shift from face to face to teaching language online.

Findings from part-II of the questionnaire (7 items on Likert scale and an open-ended question) about possible ways of using technology for effective language teaching suggest that teachers to a great extent used technology as the most effective way of teaching aids-supplementary materials. The data revealed that the majority of teachers used most of these tools and technological devices
while teaching English language to their students (Figure 1). To understand teachers’ attitudes and beliefs about the advantages of using technology for language teaching, the study found that of the many advantages, the majority of teachers think that (a) with technology it is easy to use different types of materials (70%), (b) technology allows learning at students’ own convenient pace and time (71%), and (c) with technical expertise from anywhere in the world is accessible (79%).

The findings also suggest that teaching online through the use of technology and innovative education software and apps was the only best way to reach students during the Coronavirus outbreak and it helped English language teachers improve their modes of teaching as well and are now ready to adopt blended learning. Very much consistent with the research done by Simonson et al. (2011), the findings show that most teachers used various types of technology tools and devices to accelerate the language learning process in their classes and they thought that students in online classes are at the center of their teaching (see Table 2). The results also indicate that although some teachers were less familiar with many tools and ways of using technology to teach English, they were very interested in learning those tools and ways to conduct online classes, specifically, during the Covid-19 pandemic and lockdown periods. These results are in agreement with those of Solomon and Schrum (2007), Jinuma (2016), Huang et al. (2019), Al-Mekhlafi (2020), and Huang et al. (2020) studies set forth in the literature review section.

An overall finding of the present study concerning the attitudes and beliefs of teachers about the advantages of using technology for language teaching (i.e., the second research question) shows that most of the English language teachers across schools, colleges, and institutions carried a positive attitude towards the use of technology in their teaching. This finding is consistent with the results from the studies conducted in various countries (Al-Mekhlafi, 2020; Beri & Sharma, 2019; Karakaya, 2010; Kaur, 2019; Mwila, 2018; Rana, 2012; Sadik, 2006) and it is in line with findings of the studies conducted in India by (Beri & Sharma, 2019; Islahi & Nasrin, 2019; Kaur, 2019; Rana, 2012).

Results from the last research question about the major problems and challenges English language teachers experienced while conducting classes online show that their classes created problems for the families, parents whose children lack computers or smartphones or they live in disadvantaged and faraway sections of society. The teachers also rightly believed that technology has increased the divide between the haves and have-nots as it is related to affordability of better gadgets and better internet connectivity.

With regard to these findings, Kaur (2019) believes that the lack of ICT tools and technology resources and their use by students strongly influence the success of technology in teachers’ instruction process. The results also suggest that English language teachers think that the use of technology tools and devices for language teaching is time-consuming. This is in opposition to Shyamlee’s (2012) study but very much consistent with the findings of Huang et al. (2019) and Huang et al. (2020) studies, as they opined that achieving expertise in using technology tools and devices needs a lot of time and practice for both teachers and students.

Another finding from the present study, which has not been addressed in previous studies, is the lack of full support from the side of students’ parents and their families in the course of teaching and learning and their assurance on their children’s active participation in the classes (Figure 2). The results suggest that some English language teachers found online language teaching a challenge for delivering lessons and assessing their students’ learning processes. In connection with these findings, researchers suggest that for some teachers, learning how to use technology is difficult enough and for some, they are totally unprepared for this paradigm shift from face-to-face to virtual teaching, which is against their teaching philosophy (Sandholtz et al., 1997) and psychological preparedness to teach looking at the camera instead of their student’s faces that reflect feedback to their lessons.

6. Conclusions and implications
To conclude, the present study pointed out the fact that almost all English language teachers across schools, colleges, and institutions of Afghanistan and India were willing to use various technology tools
and devices in their instruction and they had a positive attitude towards the use of technology in language teaching. Having a positive attitude of teachers towards various ways of using technology for teaching language in this sensitive situation (i.e., Covid-19 pandemic) is very promising for all educational institutions and it has a positive impact on the continuance of language teaching and learning.

This study provided data about English language teachers’ preparedness and possible ways of using technology for language teaching. As per the results, the majority of teachers used Smartphones, Computers, and other devices for recording Video lessons and organizing sessions using Google Classroom, Google Meet, Zoom, YouTube, Mobile related apps (i.e., Whatsapp, Facebook, Instagram, etc.), and using certain other LMS offered by their schools and colleges. Despite all the difficulties that teachers and students had with the use of these technologies in their teaching and learning, the findings of this study suggest that the use of technology was the only best way for educational institutions to reach students and to help English language teachers improve their teaching skills during the outbreak of the coronavirus. In other words, the use of technology was the only solution that all educators and definitely English language teachers and their students had for their education during the Covid-19 outbreak.

The study also found that a good number of teachers believe in the following:

• Using technology in their classes takes a longer time for planning to include them in their lessons and finally successfully execute them in the virtual classes,
• It takes equally long time for their students to adapt to technology and virtual learning environments, and
• Using technology is time-consuming to achieve expertise in using digital tools to teach the concept/content.

Most importantly, the major challenges teachers faced while using technology for language teaching were:

• Inability to engage the students in learning activities and monitor their learning because of the virtual mode,
• Lack of full parental support for students during the classes,
• Lack of students’ active participants while doing class activities, tasks, and homework, and
• Uncertainty about whether students are the real respondents to assignments and tests.

The study implies that:

• Teachers and students are to be given time and space to learn how to use and learn through the use of effective digital tools
• While the teachers need support from the institutions and technical experts to train them appropriate to teach virtually, the students need additional constant monitoring when they learn online indicating the increase in parents participation
• Giving appropriate support to teachers and learners to decrease the digital divide by appropriate authorities is the need of the day

It is to be understood that teacher education and constant training also play a major role in preparing teachers for the unexpected and sudden changes in their nature of work and responsibilities.

It is suggested that future studies should consider in-depth qualitative research, including interviews with a) parents’, b) students’, c) institutions’ administration/management point of views, and d) technical perspective, to examine the actual use of technology for language teaching and learning as well as the quality of English language education across the mentioned two countries.
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Appendix A. Language Teachers' Preparedness to Use Technology during Covid-19

Please select the most appropriate number below that best represent your views about the advantages and problems of using technology for language teaching.

Part A.

| No. | Statements                                                                 | Not at all likely | Very much likely |
|-----|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------|------------------|
| 1   | I use technology only as a teaching aid: LCD Projector, Bluetooth Speakers, Smartboards, etc. | 1                 | 2                |
|     |                                                                             | 3                 | 4                |
|     |                                                                             | 5                 | 6                |
|     |                                                                             | 7                 |                  |
| 2   | I blend technology to supplement materials                                  | 1                 | 2                |
|     |                                                                             | 3                 | 4                |
|     |                                                                             | 5                 | 6                |
|     |                                                                             | 7                 |                  |
| 3   | I am familiar with a couple of tools but have not really used them          | 1                 | 2                |
|     |                                                                             | 3                 | 4                |
|     |                                                                             | 5                 | 6                |
|     |                                                                             | 7                 |                  |
| 4   | Though not an expert, I keep learning as and when required                  | 1                 | 2                |
|     |                                                                             | 3                 | 4                |
|     |                                                                             | 5                 | 6                |
|     |                                                                             | 7                 |                  |
| 5   | I have learnt a few tools during Covid-19 lockdown                          | 1                 | 2                |
|     |                                                                             | 3                 | 4                |
|     |                                                                             | 5                 | 6                |
|     |                                                                             | 7                 |                  |
| 6   | I am very good at teaching online                                           | 1                 | 2                |
|     |                                                                             | 3                 | 4                |
|     |                                                                             | 5                 | 6                |
|     |                                                                             | 7                 |                  |
| 7   | I have no knowledge of technology                                           | 1                 | 2                |
|     |                                                                             | 3                 | 4                |
|     |                                                                             | 5                 | 6                |
|     |                                                                             | 7                 |                  |

(1) Please mention any other way of using technology for language teaching or more than one option that you have opted for, here.
Part B. What do you think are the advantages of using technology to teach English language?

| No. | Statements                                               | Strongly disagree | Disagree | Neutral | Agree | Strongly agree |
|-----|----------------------------------------------------------|-------------------|----------|---------|-------|----------------|
| 1   | Makes classes more interesting                          |                   |          |         |       |                |
| 2   | Easy to use different types of materials                |                   |          |         |       |                |
| 3   | Allows learning at students' own convenient pace and time|                   |          |         |       |                |
| 4   | I can teach from wherever I am                          |                   |          |         |       |                |
| 5   | Students have access to better language                 |                   |          |         |       |                |
| 6   | Parents can also take an active role in the learning process |                 |          |         |       |                |
| 7   | Fewer cases of abuse                                    |                   |          |         |       |                |
| 8   | Expertise from anywhere in the world is accessible       |                   |          |         |       |                |
Part C. What are the major problems you (teachers) have faced while teaching online?

| No. | Statements                                                                 | Strongly disagree | Disagree | Neutral | Agree | Strongly agree |
|-----|----------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------|----------|---------|-------|----------------|
| 1   | Longer time for planning and execution                                     |                    |          |         |       |                |
| 2   | Not used to handling Edtech tools, hence dependent on technical expert to fix the technical glitches |                    |          |         |       |                |
| 3   | It is time consuming to achieve expertise in learning/using appropriate digital tools to teach the concept/content |                    |          |         |       |                |
| 4   | Not sure if my student is the real respondent to my assignments and quizzes |                    |          |         |       |                |
| 5   | Assessment takes up more time                                               |                    |          |         |       |                |
| 6   | Twice deprived/disadvantaged students in the class                          |                    |          |         |       |                |
| 7   | Not enough motivated students                                               |                    |          |         |       |                |
| 8   | Do not know how to engage the students in online sessions                   |                    |          |         |       |                |

(1) Please add your opinion about other major problems you as a teacher faced while teaching online.
Appendix B. Themes/categories that emerged from respondents’ answers to open-ended items

(i) Ed Tech tools have to be introduced to the students

(ii) Use of technology promotes creativity and innovation in teachers

(iii) Virtual classes produce learning opportunities for both teachers and students

(iv) There is no substitute for blended/virtual teaching/learning method during the Covid-19

(v) Teaching online is challenging and assessment is very difficult

(vi) Lack of full support from students’ parents and families and active participation of students in their classes

(vii) Use of technology encourages learner autonomy

(viii) Virtual classrooms do not replace traditional teaching

(ix) Teaching language with technology is very fruitful