The Role of Virtual Learning in Enhancing EFL Learning Outcomes A Case Study of EFL Instructors at Sudanese Universities

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Abstrast:

Virtual learning program offers a possibility to the attendees to share different resources. This study aims at: enhancing EFL learning outcomes through using virtual learning method and encouraging GEG group of Sudan to take a role in the professional teacher. The study adopted the descriptive analytical method. A questionnaire was distributed to (24) EFL instructors who were randomly selected from Sudanese Universities. Then the collected data were statistically analyzed by SPSS program. The result indicated that: virtual learning is the best way to continue the teaching and learning process during pandemic like Covid-19, although virtual learning instructors of Sudan (GEG group) took a role in the empowering EFL teachers and learners, in Sudan, the internet and electric power cost a lot, lack of alignment of GEG tools with the students' actual needs, lack of knowledge for GEG tools among teachers. The study recommended that: other researchers should carry a larger scale population confirming the achieved results here, technology should be utilized in EFL teaching and learning process and there should be a systematic training program for teachers who employ technology in EFL teaching.

Key words: Virtual learning, learning outcomes, GEG group, during pandemic, systematic training.

مستخلص :

برنامـج التعلـم الإفتراضـي يعطـي إمكانيـات للمشـاركين بمشـاركة مختلـف المصـادر التعليميـة. تهـدف الدراسـة إلى تحسـين مخرجـات تعلـم اللغـة الانجليزيـة عـبر إسـتخدام برنامـج التعلـم الإفـتراضي عـبر الانترنـت كمـا تهـدف إلى تشـجيع مجموعـة مـدربي الانترنـت السـودانيين عـلى تدريـب المعلمـين عـلى إسـتخدام التقنيـات الحديثـة في عمليـة التدريس.إسـتخدت الدراسـة المنهـج التحليلي الوصفـي كمـا إسـتخدمت نظـام الاسـتبانة لجمـع البيانـات مـن خمسـة (24) معلمـاً ومعلمـة بالجامعـات السـودانية لجمـع البيانات.تـم تحليـل البيانـات إحصائيا بنظـام (SPSS). وبعـد تحليـل الاستبانة توصلـت الدراسـة للأتي:يعتـبر التعلـم عـبر الطريقـة الافتراضيـة عـبر الانترنـت مـن أفضـل الوسـائل لمواصلـة التعلـم خاصـة في زمـن الأزمـات مثـل أزمـة (Covid -19) ،رغـم الجهـود التـي يبذلهـا مـدربي تعليـم الانترنـت في السـودان في تعليـم المعلمـين والطـلاب عـلى إسـتخدام الانترنـت في التعلـم إلا أن الانترنـت مكلـف في السـودان والمـدد الكهربـائي غـير مسـتقر كمـا يوجـد نقـص في معـدات الانترنـت التـي تسـتخدم في التعليـم توصي الدراسـة بمزيـد مـن البحـوث عـن إسـتخدلم التعلـم الإفتراضي في السـودان وإنشـاء برنامـج تدريـب منتظـم لتدريـب المعلمـين عـلى إسـتخدام برنامـج أون لايـن للتعلـم.

1.0 Introduction

The application of virtual learning enables teachers and learners to make local and global societies that connect them with the people and expand opportunities for their learning (Bransford, et al.2000). Online learning is appropriate to use when learners have limited mobility. Occasionally, certain situations force learners to keep away from their school. At this situation, online learning becomes the answer to omit barrier of a distance since it offers the flexibility of learning (Lipshitz & Parsons, 2008). This opportunity of online learning then has been used for educational systems in many countries during Covid-19. Any activity causes a crowd during Covid-19 in Sudan is abandoned. A crowd is mentioned as one cause of high distribution of Covid-19 virus. Since in-classroom setting causes crowd in schools, online learning setting has been used to avoid a crowd. However, the implementation of online learning during Covid-19 in Sudan is less followed by the readiness of its implementation. The sudden change from in-classroom setting to online learning setting affects the online learning readiness.

1.1 Objectives of the Study

The study aims to:

1. enhance EFL learning outcomes through using virtual learning methods.
2. encourage group Google English group of Sudan to take a role in the

professional teacher development plans to cope with what is running around the world.

1.2 Questions of the Study

The study will answer the following questions:

1. To what extent does online learning enhance EFL learning outcomes?

2. To what extent do GEG group Sudan take a role in supporting the professional teacher development programs?

1.3 Significance of the study

The study shows the advantages of utilizing virtual learning method as online methods in EFL teaching and learning. The study advices the teachers to use the technology to increase learners motivation It also encourage teachers to train on how to apply virtual learning in EFL teaching.

1.4 Research Methodology

The study will use the descriptive analytical method. A questionnaire will be used as a tool to collect the data from the EFL instructors at Sudanese Universities. Then, the collected data will be analyzed statistically by the SPSS Program

2.0 Literature Review

Virtual education refers to distance learning in which course content is delivered through various tools such as course management software, multimedia resources, and videoconferencing. The VL offers a possibility to the attendees to share different resources at once and work with them as if they were at the same place where (real) resources are. (Trajkovic and Davcev, 2001). Virtual education and simulated learning experiences, such as games or divisions, also let students connect classroom information to real-world scenarios. In practice, a "virtual education course" is an instructional course or at least a significant component of one that is given over the Internet. With free Web programs like Audacity, teachers have been able to create their own podcasts (Kern, 2013) and encourage students to do so. These can be stored for free online (e.g. at www.youtube.com), and shared with an unlimited audience.

However, the term "virtual" is used in a broader sense to characterize a course that is not taught face-to-face in a classroom but as distance learning in which course content is delivered through various tools such as course management software, multimedia resources, and videoconferencing. Virtual education and simulated learning experiences, such as games or divisions, also let students connect classroom information to real-world scenarios.

Global GEG is a global network of volunteer Educator Leaders who want to empower and inspire teachers, schools, and educational communities to create environments that promote deep learning, creativity, and continual growth

2.1 Online Learning at Home During Covid-19 Out Breaks

Regarding the undergraduate EFL students' view of the implementation of online learning during Covid-19 outbreaks, it is argued that, online learning from home is the best way to continue the teaching and learning process during pandemic.

The information available online is often jumbled, non-sequential, and interactive (Bojović, 2016); thus, students need to change their searching habits and deal with fluid informational environments, which is very different from the traditional way of searching information. Online learning is considered as a good choice to continue the teaching and learning process during the pandemic because it can eliminate distance and time with the help of internet-based digital platforms. Online learning has become an important component in education, and it is believed to provide unique advantages in the learning process. The way to deliver the course in online learning is based on students' comfort with technology used, students' technical expertise to the technology used, and students' available time (Ghirardini, 2011). Therefore, in many countries, instruction has begun to shift from traditional or face-to-face classroom settings to online learning environments. This shift has been occurring in all fields of education, including English language instruction.

In online EFL classes, the teacher and students are physically distanced, which might create certain restrictions teaching learning activities that could be done in in-person classes. However, if the teacher and the students have learned the basic knowledge, ideas and skills for online language teaching, and if they are equipped with online tools, platforms and resources, the online English classes can be much more effective, engaging, interactive and interesting. (Subedi, 2021)

2.2 Difficulties of Online Learning

Despite the benefits of online teaching and learning environment, students taking online courses could face difficulties that they might never have encountered in a traditional teaching and learning environment (Tsai, 2009), and these difficulties could have a negative impact on their learning performance.

2.3 Google English Group Sudan

Sudanese GEG is a group of volunteer Educator Leaders from all across Sudan who work to empower and motivate teachers, schools, and educational communities to promote deep learning, innovation, and continual growth. Google has always provided free limitless storage to schools and universities that meet specific criteria. However, our storage needs have grown dramatically as we have expanded to serve more colleges and institutions each year.

Storage is rarely used equally across or within institutions, and school leaders sometimes lack the skills to address this. We will be developing a new shared storage model and assisting administrators and school leaders in managing their storage in the future to support schools and ensure equitable allocation of this precious resource. Nothing will change today, and we anticipate that the new policy's shared storage will cover more than 99 percent of institutions. Google Workspace for Education will continue to be guided by the principles of choice, flexibility, and simplicity, both now and in the future. Regardless of whether the edition is best for you, we hope our tools continue to help your school community cooperate more effectively and manage classrooms

3.0 Material and Method:

The participants of this study were (24) EFL instructors who were randomly selected from Sudanese Universities. The researcher distributed the questionnaire at universities with assistance of some colleagues. Then the collected data was statistically analyzed by SPSS program. The analyses of the questionnaire were shown in the following tables.

3.1 Data Analysis

The questionnaire was designed to investigate educators' views about how GEG Sudan can take a role in the professional educator development plans to cope with what is running around the world.

Statement (1) I am satisfied with the virtual learning experience.

Table (1) Satisfying with the virtual learning experience.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Neutral	1	4.2	4.2	4.2
	Agree	10	41.7	41.7	45.8
	Strongly agree	13	54.2	54.2	100.0
	Total	24	100.0	100.0	

The results of data analysis in table (1) shows that most respondents,(54.2 %) strongly agree,(41.7 %) agree that they are satisfied with the virtual learning experience. Only (4.2%) of the sample are neutral. Therefore, this statement is justified.

Statement (2) I think learning via virtual classrooms and platforms is easier than the traditional one.

Table (2) Learning via virtual classrooms and platforms is easier than the traditional one.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Disagree	3	12.5	12.5	12.5
	Neutral	3	12.5	12.5	25.0
	Agree	15	62.5	62.5	87.5
	Strongly agree	3	12.5	12.5	100.0
	Total	24	100.0	100.0	

The statistical results in table (2) show that (12.5 %) of the sample strongly agree, (62.5%) agree,(12%) of the sample are neutral and (12%) of the sample disagree that they think learning via virtual classrooms and platforms is easier than the traditional one. Thus, this statement is proved.

Statement (3)   I am satisfied and have enough experience with virtual learning .

Table (3) Satisfying having enough experience with virtual learning services

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Disagree	3	12.5	12.5	12.5
	Neutral	1	4.2	4.2	16.7
	Agree	10	41.7	41.7	58.3
	Strongly agree	10	41.7	41.7	100.0
	Total	24	100.0	100.0	

The statistical results in table (3) show that (41.7 %) of the sample strongly agree, (41.7 %) agree,(4.2%) of the sample are neutral and (12.5%) disagree that they are satisfied and have enough experience with virtual learning services and tools. The statement is proved.

Statement (4)   prefer blended learning even after the end of

Covid19 pandemic.

Table (4) Preferring blended learning even after the end of Covid19 pandemic

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Disagree	2	8.3	8.3	8.3
	Neutral	4	16.7	16.7	25.0
	Agree	5	20.8	20.8	45.8
	Strongly agree	13	54.2	54.2	100.0
	Total	24	100.0	100.0	

According to the statistical analysis in table (4) (54.2%) of the sample strongly agree, (20.8%) of them agree,(16.7%) of them are neutral and (8.3%) of them disagree that they prefer blended learning even after the end of Covid19 pandemic.

Statement (5) GEG Sudan provides opportunities for learners to communicate.

Table (5) GEG Sudan provides many opportunities for learners to communicate.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Disagree	2	8.3	8.3	8.3
	Agree	11	45.8	45.8	54.2
	Strongly agree	11	45.8	45.8	100.0
	Total	24	100.0	100.0	

The analysis of the data in table (5) explains that (45.8%) of the sample agree, (45.8 %) of them strongly agree and (8.3%) of the sample are neutral that GEG Sudan provides many opportunities for teachers and learners to communicate.

Statement (6) Utilizing GEG Sudan education techniques can improve learning, productivity, and performance.

Table (6) Utilizing GEG Sudan education techniques can improve learning, productivity.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Neutral	6	25.0	25.0	25.0
	Agree	5	20.8	20.8	45.8
	Strongly agree	13	54.2	54.2	100.0
	Total	24	100.0	100.0	

The statistical results in table (6) show that (54.2 %) of the sample strongly agree, (20.8%) of them agree and (25%) of them are neutral that utilizing GEG Sudan education techniques can improve learning, productivity, and performance. Therefore, this statement is proved.

Statement (7) EFL learners are highly motivated due to novelty of GEG Sudan tools.

Table (7) Learners are highly motivated due to novelty of GEG Sudan tools.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Disagree	1	4.2	4.2	4.2
	Neutral	8	33.3	33.3	37.5
	Agree	9	37.5	37.5	75.0
	Strongly agree	6	25.0	25.0	100.0
	Total	24	100.0	100.0	

The statistical results in table (7) show that, (25 %) of the sample strongly agree, (37.5 %) of them agree,(33.3%) of the sample are neutral and (4.2%) of them disagree that learners are highly motivated due to novelty of GEG Sudan tools. Thus, the statement is justified

Statement (8)- GEG tools are active and manageable during the class.

Table (8) GEG tools are active and manageable during the class..

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Disagree	1	4.2	4.2	4.2
	Neutral	5	20.8	20.8	25.0
	Agree	9	37.5	37.5	62.5
	Strongly agree	9	37.5	37.5	100.0
	Total	24	100.0	100.0	

The analysis of the data in table (8) shows that (37.5 %) of the sample strongly agree and (37.5%) of them agree,(20.8%) are neutral and (4.2%) disagree that GEG tools are active and manageable during the class. Accordingly, this statement is accepted.

   Statement (9) Google forms tools are very supportive for GEG Sudan teachers.

Table (9) Google tools are very supportive for GEG Sudan teachers.

SM9					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Neutral	4	16.7	16.7	16.7
	Agree	10	41.7	41.7	58.3
	Strongly agree	10	41.7	41.7	100.0
	Total	24	100.0	100.0	

The statistical results in table (9) show that most of the sample (41.7 %) strongly agree, (41.7 %) of the sample agree and (16.7%) of the sample are neutral that Google forms tools are very supportive for GEG Sudan teachers. According to the statistical analysis this statement is proved.

Statement (10) Educators who use Google workplace tools are flexible and fast achievers of their lesson objectives

Table (10) Educators who use Google workplace tools are flexible and fast achievers

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Neutral	3	12.5	12.5	12.5
	Agree	9	37.5	37.5	50.0
	Strongly agree	12	50.0	50.0	100.0
	Total	24	100.0	100.0	

The data in table (10) explains that (50 %) of the sample strongly agree, (37.5%) agree and (12.5%) of the sample are neutral that educators who use Google workplace tools are flexible and fast achievers of their lesson objectives. Accordingly, the statement is justified.

Statement (11) In the traditional Learning the teacher is the primary source of information. By contrast the Sudan model deliberately shift the mode to a web-based resources.

Table (11) Sudan model deliberately shift the mode to a web-based resources.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Disagree	1	4.2	4.2	4.2
	Neutral	2	8.3	8.3	12.5
	Agree	11	45.8	45.8	58.3
	Strongly agree	10	41.7	41.7	100.0
	Total	24	100.0	100.0	

According to the statistical analysis in table (11), (41.7%) of the sample strongly agree, (55.8%) of them agree, (8.3%) of them are neutral and (4.2%) of them disagree with the statement. The statement is justified.

Statement (12) The role of a professional educator is even more important, and often more- demanding, in a Flipped Classroom than in a traditional one.

Table (12) the role of a professional educator in a flipped classroom

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Neutral	1	4.2	4.2	4.2
	Agree	15	62.5	62.5	66.7
	Strongly agree	8	33.3	33.3	100.0
	Total	24	100.0	100.0	

The statistical results in table (12) show that (33.3 %) of the sample strongly agree, (62.5 %) of them agree and (4.2 %) of them are neutral that the role of a professional educator is even more important, and often more- demanding, in a flipped classroom than in a traditional one.. In accordance with this, this statement is accepted.

Findings:

The study came out with the following results:

The findings also indicate:

1. Virtual learning is the best way to continue the teaching and learning process during pandemic.

2. Although virtual learning instructors of Sudan (GEG group) took a role in the empowering EFL teachers and learners, in Sudan, the internet and electric power cost a lot.

3. There is a lack of alignment of GEG tools with the students' actual needs.

4. Lack of knowledge for GEG tools among teachers.

5. There is a lack of formal regulation and institutional support for the GEG provision.

Recommendations

The study recommended that:

1. 1. Other researchers should carry a larger scale population confirming the achieved results here.
2. 2.Technology should be utilized in EFL teaching and learning process.
3. There should be a systematic training program for teachers who employ technology in EFL teaching.

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