

Moodle or Social Networks: What Alternative Refuge is Appropriate to Algerian EFL Students to Learn during Covid-19 Pandemic

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Abstract

Social platforms like Facebook, Twitter, Whatsapp, YouTube, and Instagram have become the refuge of teachers and students during the last years. However, there are many educational platforms set by the Algerian Ministry of Higher Education like Moodle and which bring the same services to the learners but in an academic setting. These platforms, mainly Facebook, has gained celebrity in the last years and are still achieving the same position during the Covid-19 pandemic even though many applications come to life, and virtual learning has become the only choice. The current research work under scrutiny aims to provide an in-depth look at the situation of EFL teaching and learning in the Algerian context during the Covid-19 pandemic by taking the department of English Language and Literature at Saida University as a case in point. It also endeavors to shed light on the learning process and which tools educators have used to promote virtual learning. As such, the main questions that set the study are how do Algerian universities face Covid-19 pandemic? Are Algerian EFL students motivated towards academic platforms like Moodle? Do EFL learners benefit from the new applications like Google Classroom and Zoom in promoting E-learning? Where about social networks like Facebook? Are these social platforms still gaining fame in the learning process during the pandemic? To answer these problematic questions, the researcher conducted a study with EFL first-year Master students and eight teachers of the English language at Saida University, Algeria. The researcher collected data through a questionnaire and an interview. The findings revealed that the most used tool for educational purposes was Facebook due to the students' motivation. The second tool was the Moodle platform. The analysis also demonstrated that students prefer face-to-face interaction in the classroom and handouts more than virtual learning. The results also showed that students are motivated to employ both SNSs like Facebook and YouTube and educational platforms as Moodle as complementary teaching materials.

Keywords: Covid-19 pandemic, EFL students, e-learning, Google Classroom, Moodle, motivation, social networks, Zoom

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Introduction

Technology has turned the whole world into a small town where people can exchange information and do business in an easy, fast, and cheap way. The use of technology has become an essential ingredient in economic, political, social, and education makes no exception. Indeed, technology has turned into the only wheel that fasters learning by providing many platforms and applications to ease the learning process and teaching purposes. Among the most widely used social platforms that most learners favor is Facebook. According to Tosun (2018), Facebook has become the first used social network worldwide. He added that YouTube is the second social platform and the first choice for learners to exchange information. In contrast, Whatsapp ranks in the third position. The first reason is that these platforms attract a high number of users worldwide in comparison to educational platforms like Moodle. The second reason is linked, according to Tosu, (2018), to the setting in which the teacher or the student uses the social network, i.e., formal or informal. He further claimed that *the formal setting* is limited to announcements and general information about the universities and institutions like the case of Oxford and Cambridge that the statistics make them as the first institutions that employ social networks for these purposes. On the other hand, *the formal settings* for other types of social networks, which have an academic setting like Moodle, Blackboard, and Sakai, are still struggling to gain celebrity of Facebook or YouTube. However, these platforms have also provided the same features to promote learning by creating an account and registering.

Algeria has made many educational reforms in the last few decades to improve the levels of learning and teaching through training teachers and integrating students to e-learning. Both teachers and learners show positive attitudes toward the inclusion of technology in the teaching and learning process. However, these attitudes differ widely among learners. Most of them still favor social networks, mainly YouTube and Facebook, to learn in formal settings. In contrast, others find academic platforms more workable since they take an official and a formal setting.

The Ministry of Higher Education has recently trained, mainly novice teachers on how to work with platforms like Moodle and Blackboard. On the other hand, old teachers have developed a *technophobia* toward the implementation of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) in general and the use of these platforms in particular. Most of the teachers still prefer the traditional method of teaching and refuse any contact with students either in *the formal setting* (Moodle) or in *the informal setting* (Facebook). *This technophobia*, which Azarfam and Jabbari (2012) called it, presents many obstacles that discourage teachers to benefit from its use in the classroom. Among the reasons that increase *techno-anxiety* is the lack of materials; therefore, teachers are accustomed to teaching their lectures and giving the students the handouts. They struggle to cope with the new changes that oblige them to learn how to use technology in the classroom and keep stuck to *the traditional classroom environment*.

Algerian universities make tremendous efforts to promote e-learning both in *formal* and *informal settings*. They employ social networks like Facebook to announce for students exams, tests, and other issues. In contrast, introducing lectures or seminars remains few both on

Facebook and YouTube. The main reason is that most teachers think that social networks are not secure.

The process of teaching and learning has changed, and perhaps the ministry will give more importance to the use of academic platforms in teaching and learning after the *Covid-19 pandemic*. This does not mean that all Algerian teachers still prefer to use traditional classroom-based instruction. A great number shows interest in using educational and social platforms like Moodle and Edmodo, although the latter is still new among teachers. Edmodo, as educational social networking, has received significant interest among teachers worldwide and is regarded as the “Facebook for education” (Enriquez, 2014, p. 1, as quoted in Shinji, 2016, p. 39). To this end, the present research work tries to provide a spindle eye on the e-learning situation in the Algerian higher education by taking the EFL context as a case study. It also aims to shed light on the teaching and learning situation through ICT during the Covid-19 pandemic. In other words, the current paper attempts to provide an ankle-eye on teachers’ and students’ familiarity with virtual learning, educational networking platforms like Moodle, or they share more attitudes toward social networks like Facebook and Youtube. In this regard, the study sets around the following research questions:

- What is the status of the Algerian Higher Education during the Covid-19 pandemic?
- Are Algerian teachers and learners familiar with virtual learning and the use of educational networks like Moodle?
- Do Algerian students and teachers, mainly in the EFL context benefit from the use of applications like Google meet and Zoom, or are they still sharing positive attitudes towards informal social networks primarily the Facebook?

The use of formal and informal social networking sites, in classroom-based instruction, is still not being investigated, mainly educational social networks like Moodle. Besides, the use of these sites for educational purposes still needs more scholarships. According to Gorg (2014), “little is known about how online social networks such as Facebook can develop a sense of community in language classrooms or how they can impact the development of didactic practices in a language classroom” (p. 148).

Some scholars disagree to study languages through the use of informal settings like Facebook. However, learners are eager to learn the language in an informal context more than the formal one. Social networks like Facebook, Youtube, and WhatsApp allow students in an international setting to meet and discuss different topics. The student will learn through computer or mobile mediated communication not only the standard form of the language but also its varieties and accent.

Another important reason for the necessity of integrating social networks is the learners’ positive attitudes toward the net and technology as integral parts of their daily life and communication (Salaway & Caruso, 2007; Shier, 2005, as cited in Gorg, 2014, p. 148)

The interest of the present paper is in two folds: it aims to show that both educational and social networks are useful in the teaching and learning process; however, many problems surround the teaching and learning process in *an informal setting* like Facebook as “loss of

privacy, bullying, harming contacts and more” (Livingston & Brake, 2010, as cited in Espinosa, 2015, p. 2206). Besides, it tends to explore the current situation of EFL learning and teaching during the Covid-19 pandemic.

Literature Review

Social Networks and Education

Social Networking Sites (SNS) are platforms, which people employ to sharing information either for business, economic, and political purposes. Those people can share their activities and experiences through creating an account and joining a particular group. Hence, SNS starts to direct the way people, think, behave, and communicate. Boyd and Ellison (2007, p. 211) defined SNS as:

Web-based services that allow individuals to (1) construct a public or semi-public profile within a bounded system, (2) articulate a list of other users with whom they share a connection, and (3) view and traverse their list of connections and those made by others within the system. (qtd in Alnujaidi, 2017, p. 34)

Many scholars make a difference between social networks, social media, and social networking sites. According to Carr and Hayes (2015), SNS tools are a part of social media tools, while Boyd and Ellison (2007, p. 211) shed light on the main difference between social network sites and social networking sites (as cited in Alnujaidi, 2017). They write that “Networking emphasizes relationship initiation, often between strangers; while on many SNS, participants are not necessarily networking or looking to meet people; instead, they are primarily communicating with people who are already a part of their extended social network” (qtd in Alnujaidi, 2017, p. 35).

Researchers conducted studies on the most widely used SNS tools by social media users. Most statistics show that Facebook is still gaining popularity among people in all domains. Figure one gives new statistics on the most widely used SNS tools:

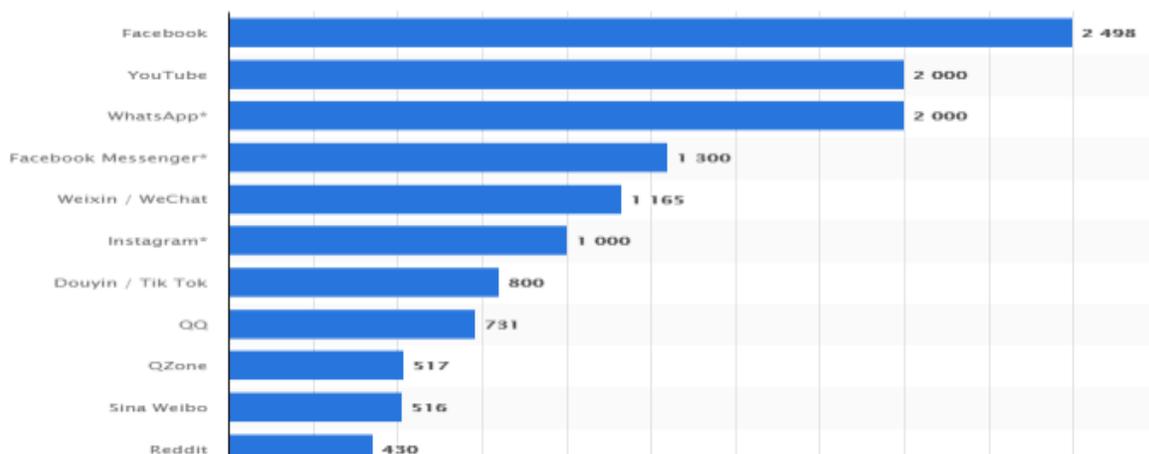


Figure 1. Most widely used social networks worldwide (Statista, 2020)

SNS provides a platform for an infinite number of users who can share the same interests and hastens communication and exchanges ideas. These platforms offer a set of applications with the same goal i.e., gathering a significant number of users, mainly from the young generation who uses and masters SNS more than the old one (Gorg, 2014).

Studies proved that learners prefer to use technology in learning, mainly YouTube and Facebook. Visual aids attract the young generation's attention more than printed books. They prefer ready-made information rather than doing research. In his part, Gorg (2014) argued that students also enjoy using these networks in a formal setting i.e., they are attracted to "face-to-face contact with their instructors and used Web 2.0 tools for communication" (p. 1). On the other hand, teachers' attitudes affect the use of SNS. This means that the teachers' ability and motivation to employ SNS is essential to motivate the learners to give these platforms an educational background rather than wasting time in watching and sharing videos. In his part, Petosky (2014, p. 1) maintained that "teachers have to find out where the students are, and work from there. Well, the students are on Facebook" (qtd in Espinosa, 2015, p. 2207). Robleyer, McDaniel, Webb, Herman, and Witty (2010, p. 138) claimed that the teachers should share positive attitudes toward SNS and their use by the learners. In this vein, they highlighted that:

Unless this tendency changes and faculty perceive Facebook and its sister technologies, both current and those to come, as additional opportunities for educational communication and mentoring, SNSs may become yet another technology that has great potential for improving the higher education experience but failed to be adopted enough to have any real impact. (qtd in Gorg, 2014, p. 443)

Similarly, Dudeney and Hockly (2007) observed that the young generation no longer favors traditional classroom-based instruction. Teachers are obliged to cope with the blessings of the new technologies and use free materials and a wide range of activities that they can share through SNS. In the same vein, Schmidt (2002) highlighted that teachers can benefit from combining both traditional and online teaching and learning tools. They added that the teachers should plan, control, and direct the process all the time.

Social Networks and Education

Most studies agree that technology and social media have become an integral part of the younger generation's daily lives. Universities and institutions can benefit from this aspect and attract the students' attitudes toward the use of SNS in learning. Gorg (2014) shared the same view when she posited that *digital natives*, as she named them, prefer SNS, which becomes an integral ingredient in their "daily life and have an influence on a students' learning motivation" (p. 153). Gorg (2014) further suggested that it is preferable to understand the students' overuse of SNS. She added that SNSs like Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, WhatsApp and Instagram can promote communication between instructors, teachers, and students.

Most universities and institutions use SNS tools, mainly Facebook in both administrative and academic purposes. However, studies on the appropriate strategies and the directed learning goals are still few, although SNSs offer many opportunities. In their part, Harrison and Thomas (2009) believed that researchers should study the possibilities for integrating SNS tools in the

learning process, mainly in learning foreign languages (Management Association, Information Resources, 2016). They claimed that researchers conducted little research on Computer-Mediated Social Networks (CMSN) and Computer-Mediated Communication (CMC) in the classroom (Management Association, Information Resources, 2016). They also posited that in learning English as a Foreign Language, the learning process is not limited to the classroom but it can be conducted virtually where technology can play a vital role in the process. They added that the students' motivation can be an essential factor in the process since "social networks are used by millions of users, most of whom are university students and adolescents, they have the potential to serve as lifelong learning channel for teachers and students" (cited in Management Association, Information Resources, 2016, p. 1464).

Today learners no longer favor the traditional classroom instruction or delivering lectures through handouts. Besides, the delivery of lectures in word or pdf formats has received little attention from students whether they are published in universities' webpages or through social media tools like Facebook. Today learners are more motivated towards visual aids in learning like delivering lectures via YouTube, recoding audio/visual lectures, and posting them on Facebook. As such, there is a need to study the possible relation between pedagogy, SNS, and social interaction as key motivating factors in building a technology-based classroom. According to the Management Association, Information Resources (2016), "pedagogies in SNS need to engage learners in the social processes of knowledge formation. This is achieved by encouraging personal choice, collaboration, participation, communication and creativity" (p. 1466).

Many studies endorsed the usefulness of SNS in Foreign Language Learning. According to Maloney (2007), learners and educators can use SNS in formal settings by connecting learners who can form groups. Similar studies were conducted by Lewis and Currie (2009). They focused their study on the students' engagement and motivation (Management Association, Information Resources, 2016).

Facebook for Educational Purposes

Facebook is regarded as the first widely used tool or form of SNS. The application was designed for educational purposes. However, it becomes a means of social interaction between speakers at an international level. With growing interests in e-learning and the integration of SNS in the classroom context, researchers directed their attention toward exploring the use of SNS in education, mainly the teaching and learning of languages. Some studies conducted recently, like those of Schroeder and Greenbowe (2009), confirmed the previous view. They highlighted that EFL students showed positive attitudes toward the use of Facebook in learning the English language (Deng & Tavares, 2013). Besides, Facebook provides a platform where the students can meet "indirectly" through "creating a learning community-a vital component of student education" (Baker, 1999, p. 5).

In their part, Palloff and Pratt (2007) believed that Facebook provides a community for communication; thus, students can use it to create a learning community for educational purposes (Deng & Tavares, 2013). Wise et al. (2011) observed that students spend a great deal of time using Facebook for social purposes; henceforth, teachers or educators can direct them to employ

it in learning (Deng & Tavares, 2013). As such, teachers and instructors can benefit from the students' attitudes and engage them in learning through Facebook. In his part, Espinosa (2015) posited that "if teachers use Facebook effectively, many of the practices and experiences that occur in this social network can contribute to enhancing learning" (p. 2207). Scholars like Godwin-Jones (2008), Garrison and Kanuka (2004), and Wenger (1998) maintained that Facebook provides a social space where people can meet and communicate from different cultures, languages, and ethnicities. Therefore, it can increase the students' motivation and raise their cross-cultural awareness and understanding (Espinosa, 2015). Although language learning occurs in an *informal setting*, Facebook is still helpful since learners can share and develop their readings, listening, and writing through sharing texts and videos. Scholars like Kerwin (2012) highlighted that the use of SNS like Facebook promotes the students' creativity and develops their critical thinking skills. He further maintained that through posting texts, videos, and images, learners are using their acquired knowledge in the language. Hence, SNS can help learners to use both synchronous and asynchronous learning strategies. These strategies can foster motivation and engagement in the learning process.

In the Algerian context, teachers think that the use of SNS, mainly Facebook in learning is not useful and effective in language learning since learning a foreign language, needs face-to-face interaction. They forget that SNS has become "second nature to our students" (Fewkes & McCabe, 2012, p. 93), and they can also benefit from it. Perhaps, the first reason is that teachers do not want to meet students in an *informal setting*. Hence, institutions and even educators restrict the use of Facebook to announce or post lectures.

YouTube for Educational Purposes

Technology has changed and impacted the learning and teaching processes in general. It turns the learning from teacher-centered to learner-centered since the student has access to the net and can have an overview of the lectures before the teacher conducts the lecture. YouTube is another social media tool that this study takes into account to test the students' motivation toward the most used SNS tool. Researchers conducted few studies on the use of YouTube. According to Preece (2014), YouTube is an essential platform that gives the chance for all users to watch videos.

Most of the conducted studies concentrated on the effectiveness of YouTube on the students' engagement in the classroom. Other studies tested the students' motivation for the use of YouTube to provide supplementary materials. Among the studies, there is a study conducted by Kelsen (2009) in Taiwan. Roodt and Peier (2013) also explored the use of YouTube in the EFL context.

Even though videos were used for decades to stimulate students for learning, some scholars see that the use of YouTube in teaching is still new and needs more research, mainly on the appropriate strategies. In his part, Caladine (2008) highlighted that:

In the 1960s and 1970s, teachers in schools and universities, as well as trainers in commercials, industrials and government organizations, had opportunities to include technological *teaching* aids such as overhead projectors, filmstrips, movies, radios and

television broadcasts in the learning they designed. In the 1960s large computers could be found at many universities but it was not until the advent of the personal computers in the 1980s that computers made an impact on teaching and learning a majority of subject areas. (p. 16)

Hence, educators turn their attention to the use of YouTube because videos prove their effectiveness in language teaching and learning. Scholars like Britisch (2009), Warschauer and Grimes (2007) claim that YouTube has become an essential source of motivation and educational materials. Posting videos on YouTube can help teachers to explain supplemental points, provide definitions and additional materials and even activities. In their part, Jones and Cuthrell (2011) observe that teachers can benefit from YouTube to test the students' language accuracy and understanding of lectures (Brook, 2011). Comac (2008) highlighted the importance of YouTube. He maintained that teachers can benefit from the use of blogs in oral expression sessions or assignments (Alwehaibi, 2015). Therefore they can evaluate the students' performance. Some studies agreed that YouTube helps EFL students to study spoken English in both formal and informal settings by exposing the learners to the language and the phonological level (Ghasemi, 2011; Derewianka, 2008 in Alwehaibi, 2015).

When it comes to reading and writing, few scholars investigated how to use YouTube to enhance these skills. Rennie (2012) and Nejati (2010) posited that YouTube has proved its effectiveness in interaction, discussions, and writing tasks (Alwehaibi, 2015). Through this study, the researcher also attempted to explore the efficacy of YouTube as a tool among EFL Master Students at Saida University during the Covid-19 pandemic.

Moodle as an Online Management Learning System

Technology has facilitated language learning by introducing platforms for educational purposes. These platforms are also known as Online Management Learning Systems (OMLS) or Course Management Systems (CMS). These systems allow students to connect in groups or individually. These platforms help the learners to get access to lectures through handouts or videos. These platforms can help teachers to publish activities and tests for their students and assess them. Some of these platforms are commercial like Blackboard, and others are free and provide open-access for both the teacher and his group like Moodle.

Suvorov (2010) posited that Moodle proves its usefulness in the EFL context through a set of tools that connect the teachers and students both synchronous and asynchronous. Naddabi (2007) reported through a study conducted in Oman that Moodle has four advantages, mainly enhancing interaction between students and teachers, promoting students' independence, helping them in their research and finally changing the learning environment from the traditional one to e-learning where all the activities and their assessments can be done virtually.

Unlike SNS, the use of platforms like Moodle provides a safe system for both the teachers and students to communicate and share research. According to Jeong (2017), "Moodle combines all instructional strategies and tools in one space" (pp. 4846-4847). He added that Moodle gives a free space where teachers and learners can have access to the platform. Hence,

“Moodle can be effective in promoting learner autonomy as well as in supporting collaboration and learner-centred learning environment” (Jeon, 2017, p. 4847).

Through the Moodle platform, teachers can supply the students with supplementary information like assignments, activities, books, and videos. Scholars like Su (2006) saw that Moodle can be effective for language learning (Suppasetserree & Dennis, 2010). As SNS, Moodle gives the chance for teachers and students to interact and exchange learning through which the teacher can direct and check “the deadline and timeframes for assignments-quizzes, forums, chats, etc” (Cole, 2005, as cited in Suppasetserree & Dennis, 2010, p. 33).

Moodle does not only boost the learners’ autonomy, it could give the student the ability to control learning. Students can select activities and groups they prefer to join. The platform also gives time for students to learn. It supports the learner-centered approach in learning. Krasnova and Ananjev (2015) maintained that Moodle can engage the learner through “highly motivating activities that positively affect students’ performance and promote their progress because they can work not only with course materials but also access any web resource” (Bouguebs, 2019, p. 1).

When it comes to the means of delivering information, Moodle permits the exchange of lectures for students who are enrolled in the group through synchronous and asynchronous communication. It promotes a timetable through which the instructor can follow the learning process and the learners’ tasks. In their part, Deng and Tavares (2013) posited that Moodle remains a platform where the students have to meet to download lectures and get feedback from teachers, unlike SNS, which provides an atmosphere where they can interact and share knowledge through inserting comments.

Google Classroom and Zoom: Other Alternatives for Virtual Learning

Many companies competed to create applications and software both for Mobile Assisted Language Learning (MALL) and Computer-Assisted Language Learning (CALL). These applications and software serve as a refuge for many institutions and universities during the Covid-19 pandemic. Through this study, the researcher will shed light on the most used software.

Google Classroom gains acceptance in the academic community as an application that can teach self-learning, encourage both the students and the teachers to stay connected. Researchers like Halverson, Spring, Huyett, Henrie, and Graham (2017) highlighted that Google Classroom (GC) is better than other platforms since it promotes face- to face interaction. According to Albashtqwi, and Al Batnaineh (2020), “online learning platforms such as Google Classroom provide flexibility in scheduling, eliminate travel expenses, and can reach out to anyone who has access to it”(p. 79).

Most of the studies, which were conducted on the use of GC, tried to test the students’ and teachers’ attitudes. Few works examined the use of the application to develop the students’ linguistic skills. Other studies focused on its effectiveness in the EFL context. For example, Kasula (2016) observed that teachers could benefit more than the students from using the application. He claimed that GC permits teachers “to display class objectives, activities, and

assignments in an orderly, focused, a productive and transparent manner for students, teachers, and administrators” (p. 11).

Some studies highlighted the efficacy of Zoom as an application in the EFL context. Studies like those of McCloskey, Thrush, Wilson-Patton and Kleskova (2012) maintained that Zoom can be useful in the EFL classroom through designing activities that suit the students’ needs for virtual learning. Other studies stressed the importance of the application as a part of synchronous learning to develop the students’ thinking skills, and problem-solving. In light of this idea, Chen and Lee (2011) believed that:

During the zoom session, students may ask questions to help them structure their sentences or do their assignments before posting them; they may be exposed to listening input to increase their schemata that develops their error correction system which is directly linked to conscious learning of a language. At the same time, students receive the essential feedback on their work from their teacher and classmates which can decrease the anxiety levels felt when sharing with others. (as cited in Ayoub, 2019, pp. 131-132)

Researchers conducted a few studies on the use of Zoom sessions to develop linguistic skills. Liang (2006) found that the use of Zoom can develop the learners’ writing skills through text chats. Liang also posited that the Zoom session can increase the students’ motivation towards e-learning and influence their face-to-face interaction. Although there are studies on the use of Zoom in the EFL context, the topic still needs investigation. Indeed, most of the studies focused on the classroom environment and students’ attitudes.

Research Methodology and Design

The researcher selected eight teachers for the interview and 90 (two groups) students for the questionnaire from the department of English Language and literature at Saida University, Algeria. The researcher selected novice teachers. Those teachers were trained on how to use ICT and educational platforms like Moodle in teaching in comparison to old teachers. The students were two Master groups belonging to two different specialities, mainly Applied Linguistics, Literature, and Civilization. These students studied English for four years. They were enrolled in an undergraduate program for three years and two years in a Master degree.

Instrumentation

The researcher designed a questionnaire for 90 students and published on their Facebook groups. The researcher also surveyed the use of YouTube among the students during the academic year 2019-2020. She observed that her students were motivated to follow teachers from other universities to study modules like research methodology and academic writing; therefore, she decided to record lectures on videos, and create her Youtube channel. She posted lectures on research methodology and academic writing. The researcher recorded and posted the lectures during the second semester. The following table gives an idea on the lectures, and the number of viewers:

Table 1. *The number of EFL students visiting research methodology and academic writing lectures on YouTube*

Lectures	Viewers' numbers
How to select sources to write the literature review	228
Steps for writing the literature review	165
Writing the review of the related literature	153
MLA In-text Citation (Academic Writing, Third Lecture)	135
MLA In-text Citation (Academic Writing, Second Lecture)	110
Writing the literature review, types of arguments	73
Integrating sources to write the literature review	50

Table one shows that the number of viewers exceeds 90 students since the researcher posted the lectures on the faculty Facebook for the first time. After that, the administration published the lectures on the faculty website and later on they posted them on the Moodle platform since the Ministry of Higher Education insisted on publishing lectures on formal platforms.

The questionnaire and the interview also contained questions about the Moodle platform and the students' motivation. The researcher also used a content analysis of the Moodle platform. This analysis is supported by a questionnaire and interview as it has already been mentioned.

The researcher divided the questionnaire into three sections. The first one was devoted to questions concerning the use of SNS, mainly Facebook, and YouTube. The second section focused on testing the students' motivation toward the use of the Moodle platform, the number of access, and its purpose. The third section was about the learners' knowledge of the use of Google meet and Zoom.

The researcher also conducted an online interview with eight teachers. These teachers were teaching modules like ESP, TEFL, British/American literature, British and American civilization, research methodology, and written expression. The researcher selected teachers who are familiar with the use of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) in the classroom. The questions of the interview focused on the teachers' motivation toward the use of SNS in posting lectures and contacting students during the Covid-19 pandemic. The questions also addressed their knowledge on the use of the Moodle platform, Google Classroom, and Zoom.

Data Presentation and Analysis

Students' Questionnaire

During the period between March and May 2020, Saida University as, many Algerian Universities, asked all teachers to upload lectures on their profiles in Moodle. The instructors preferred using a formal educational setting to contact students rather than SNSs, mainly Facebook. The main objective is to provide lectures and tests for learners through a system that can give the student time to upload lectures. They can also do their assignments, and contact their teachers virtually. It develops the student' self-autonomy to find solutions to end the academic year due to the Covid-19 pandemic. Figures below show the Moodle Platform in Saida University:



Figure 2. Moodle as an online management system at Saida University



Figure 3. Lectures posted on Moodle platform with by the researcher during the pandemic

Figure two shows the lectures posted by the researcher and the number of students who accessed the platform. The researcher asked the students about their knowledge in using such platforms and whether they accessed the platform or not. Table two provides an idea about the students’ access to the Moodle platform and the nature of the activity:

Table 2. Students’ access to Moodle and the type of activities

Activities	Description	Students’ responses
Lectures downloaded	This option helps the students to access the platform according to the level and download the lectures posted on the platform	47.78%
Assignments	It allows teachers to download tests and evaluate students	4.44%
Communication	It allows both teachers and students to meet and contact each other through chats and forums.	8.88%
Assessments	It allows teachers to prepare a quiz and collect students’ feedback.	4.44%
Other tools	It allows teachers to download other teaching materials and activities	34.4%
Total	Students’ number: 90	100%

Table two demonstrates that 47.78% of the students accessed the Moodle platform to download lectures of the second semester after the teachers uploaded all handouts. They claimed that it is

due to the Covid-19 pandemic; they were directed by the administration to download the lectures since they do not master the platform. They added that they are still new users of such systems. They used to download lectures from Facebook. The results also show that a few numbers accessed the platform to do their assignments (4.44%). They justified their answers claiming that teachers have not yet uploaded the tests, while 34.4% maintained that teachers uploaded activities and extra materials related to the lectures.

The researcher asked students on the most favored SNS tool that they used to contact teachers. Table three presents an in-depth look at the most widely used SNS platform for learning and communication in the group and with teachers.

Table 3. *The most used SNS among Master students during Covid-19 pandemic*

SNSs	Most used
Facebook	54.44%
YouTube	28.88%
WhatsApp	2.22%
Viber	1.11%
Tweeter	0%
LinkedIn	0%
Email (yahoo/gmail)	13.35%
Total	100%

The findings from table three reveal that Facebook is the most favored SNS tool used in the group either to announce administrative or pedagogical activities. They created a group Facebook where they can share books, handouts, and communicate. They also informed that teachers did not favor joining Facebook to upload lectures and assignments since they regard it as an informal setting for learning. They added that they are afraid to receive insults from some impolite students. 28.88% of the learners highlighted that they prefer YouTube channels for learning English and benefited from the lectures posted by some teachers from the department during the Covid-19 pandemic. 13.35% of the participants highlighted that they received lectures, mainly handouts, through their emails and posted them on Facebook.

The researcher designed the third question to test the students' knowledge on the new applications like Google classroom and Zoom. The following table provides an idea:

Table 4. *Students' background knowledge on the application used in flipped classrooms*

Educational applications	Students
Zoom	23.23%
Google Classroom	77.77%

Table four shows that students' knowledge of the applications used in e-learning ranges between 23.23% for Zoom application and 77.77% for Google Classroom. Some students claimed that they experienced some video conferences with some teachers during the Covid-19 pandemic. Most of these video conferences were through Google Classroom. They added that they should train them to use these applications.

The fourth question was about the most preferred means for e-learning. The question presents an overview of the students’ attitudes toward e-learning tools during March and May 2020.

Table 5. *Most favored e-learning tool among Master students during Covid-19 pandemic*

E-learning tools	Students’ responses
Facebook	61.11%
YouTube	22.22%
Moodle	11.11%
Google Classroom/ Zoom	5.56%

Findings from table five demonstrate that most students favor Facebook as an educational tool since it provides easy access to the group through which they can share videos, lectures, and even assignments. They added that some teachers also prefer Facebook to post lectures, tests, and even administrative announcements. However, they did not join the groups they sent emails for students who are responsible for the groups. They justified their answer, claiming that on Facebook, all the members are present and can express their feelings through comments or features of like/dislike, i.e., you get the answer quickly, unlike other platforms. They affirmed that on Facebook, the members develop a sense of friendship. In contrast, in Moodle, they are regarded as classmates who are enrolled by a particular system. Facebook can be a space where members, who do not belong to the group, can join it. About 22.22 % of the students prefer YouTube channels, mainly to reinforce their knowledge, get in touch with native speakers and acquire more information on given issues related to the lectures. They added that Facebook and YouTube are intertwined, i.e., they search for visual aids on different modules, and post them on Facebook to share knowledge with all the group members. For them, Moodle is a platform where they can download lectures and get teachers’ feedback i.e., they wait from teachers and cannot give or share something through this system, while Facebook promotes a space where they are free to speak spontaneously. Few students prefer Moodle because the platform can give opportunities to share lectures, communicate with teachers, create groups, and get their instructors’ feedback in a formal setting which is safe and organized, while the remaining students are interested in the flipped classroom and changing the learning environment to become learner-centered through experiencing new applications like Google Classroom and Zoom.

The fifth question focuses on the students’ motivation toward the nature of lecture i.e., whether the students prefer handouts, videos, or the interactive technique in learning the lectures. Table six gives an idea of the type of lectures delivered by their teachers.

Table 6. *Students’ motivation towards the types of lectures delivered*

Types of lectures delivered	Students’ responses
Handouts	13.33%
Videos	6.66%
Interactive method	13.35%
Interaction and handouts	66.66%

Table six reveals that 66.66% of learners prefer classroom interaction and handouts. Other answers range between 13.35% and 13.33%. Some students prefer the interactive method justifying their answers that teachers can provide them with important points and they can do the research at home and develop lectures. In contrast, other students maintained that the use of handouts is useful, especially during the Covid-19 pandemic since it is impossible to attend in class. A few numbers (6.66%) prefer videos mainly on YouTube channels created by teachers to cover the absence of the interactive method.

Teachers' Interview

The researcher conducted an online interview with eight teachers teaching English at Saida University. The questions aimed to give an overview of the teachers' solutions and the leading technology tools that they used to keep in touch with students during the Covid-19 pandemic.

Question One: How do you contact your students and deliver your lectures during Covid-19 pandemic?

The eight teachers answered that the university insisted on uploading lectures on the faculties' websites and the Moodle platform. They argued that through these solutions, all students could access the website and the Moodle platform to download the lectures and their activities. They added that they also contacted the students through emails to publish lectures on Facebook.

Question Two: Do you think that students will change their motivation toward using SNS and start employing educational platforms like Moodle?

Six teachers out of eight revealed that SNSs, mainly Facebook has become an integral part of the students' daily lives, and it is impossible to replace it with another tool or system. They added that teachers could benefit from the choices and opportunities that Facebook can provide and the students' attitudes and use them for educational purposes. They also highlighted that our learners in the department need training to use the platform Moodle correctly. They maintained that although the students will master the use of the platform or application like Google Classroom and Zoom, they will continue using Facebook to share knowledge and discuss their social issues with their peers. On the other hand, two teachers out of eight maintained that teachers can direct their students' motivation and attitudes toward the use of new e-learning tools like Moodle, Google Classroom or Zoom.

Question Three: Why do not you use SNS directly and publish your lectures and assignments for the students?

Six teachers out of eight revealed that they did not prefer to contact students in an informal setting. They justified their answers claiming that most students use pseudo names and could insult teachers or loose privacy. This point is supported by Livingston and Brake (2010) when they stated that SNS can raise "the likelihood of new risks to the self, such as the loss of privacy, bullying, harming contacts and more" (p. 75). They maintained that teachers could benefit from the advantages of SNS through planning to manage risk-taking. They concluded that there are no platforms that can create a suitable learning environment like SNS, mainly

Facebook. Another reason is that students used informal English or a mixture of French and Arabic. They do not want to join the students' group on Facebook. Two teachers out of eight observed that Facebook was an essential tool to contact students during the pandemic for administrative and pedagogical purposes. They added that they join the students' group and find it easy to publish for them. They claimed that most of them respond to the administrative instructions.

Question Four: Do you think that Moodle is beneficial and encourage e-learning in the department after the Covid-19 pandemic?

Eight teachers informed that they learned how to use the Moodle platform during their training. They added that the university needs to train all students so that they can use the platform. They also affirmed that training students and teachers is not enough to work with the system. They need to plan lectures and activities that suit the platform and e-learning. They also maintained that they can use Moodle to provide additional activities and lectures in addition to classroom instruction. In the Covid-19 pandemic, Moodle serves as a refuge for both teachers and administration to upload lectures for students during the pandemic. They can benefit from the platform to encourage virtual learning.

Question Five: Do you use learning applications like Google Classroom or Zoom in learning during the Covid-19 pandemic? What is your view on these applications?

All the interviewees agreed that technology has pushed the wheel of learning through software and applications that support virtual learning. Three out of eight teachers said that they used Google Classroom, primarily in the module of speaking. They said that it is useful for all teachers, mainly in the assessment. They also confirmed that it is helpful for teachers during the pandemic, but it cannot replace the classroom environment. They claimed that they can use the applications as supplementary tools for learning. They added that these applications can help the teacher to give feedback and score in the assignments. Other teachers claimed that most teachers and learners have no idea about the use of these applications and are stuck to the old classroom technique. Besides, teachers and learners have to understand how these applications work and their effectiveness.

Discussion and Interpretation of the Findings

The Covid-19 pandemic has triggered all the educational rules, mainly for those who do not favor the integration of technology in the classroom or at least its use to interact with students. Some teachers, mainly old ones have developed *technophobia* and do not favour technology use through emails. Those teachers need to cope with advancements that the field of teaching and learning imposes.

Through the analysis of both the students' questionnaire and the teachers' interview, the findings showed that all the participants preferred *a formal setting* in learning i.e., the use of academic platforms like Moodle to post lectures, activities, and follow the students' assessments. They also agreed to use *an informal setting* in EFL context like Facebook to post administrative announcements or to inform the students to join the Moodle platform i.e., they should employ it as a space to upload learning materials. At the same time, SNS mainly Facebook is meant to

strengthen the students' social and educational relation and foster communication and interaction. This result goes hand in hand with the findings of some scholars like Deng and Tavares (2013). The findings also revealed that SNS, mainly Facebook, YouTube, and Moodle platforms save the learning process and keep interaction between the instructors, teachers, and students during the Covid-19 pandemic. These results may answer the first research question, "how Algerian universities face Covid-19 pandemic". Indeed, most universities used technology by continuing the learning process both for pedagogical and administrative purposes.

The analysis also demonstrated that students were motivated to use the Moodle platform to download lectures and assignments. Students also prefer to contact teachers and conduct their assignment through this platform, although they are not trained. This result is similar to Suvorov's (2010) study which claimed that Moodle is also beneficial for EFL learners since it changes the learning environment, and the students developed a background knowledge on e-learning and its importance in the learning process. This result may answer the second research question, "Are Algerian EFL students motivated towards academic platforms like Moodle?"

Although the results revealed that most learners welcomed the idea of using the Moodle platform in learning English, but they are still SNS practitioners since they are accustomed to sharing their knowledge, feelings, and social lives through these platforms, mainly Facebook. This result may answer the third research question, "Where about social networks like Facebook? Are these social platforms still gaining fame in the learning process during the pandemic? Facebook is still gaining popularity and celebrity among its users, mainly the young generation who thought that it promotes creativity. This idea is similar to Kerwin's (2012) view. Indeed, students used Facebook for both educational and social purposes, i.e., in *formal and informal settings*.

The results also demonstrated that students prefer classroom interaction and handouts more than videos on YouTube or just handouts. They claimed that YouTube sessions are helpful after the lectures and handouts provide a roadmap for students in their research and revision. The results also revealed that teachers and students have a short experience in using Google Classroom and Zoom. They maintained that they are motivated to use these new applications in the learning process and benefited from Google Classroom. They also highlighted that it raises their motivation through the choices they found in the applications. This result may answer the fourth question, "Do EFL learners benefit from the new applications like Google meet and Zoom in promoting E-learning?" These answers get in harmony with Liang (2006) who observed that applications like Zoom promote face-to-face interaction.

Conclusion

This study aimed to scrutinize the teaching/learning process of English in Algeria during the Covid-19 pandemic. The researcher took the department of English Language and Literature at Saida University as a case study. It also attempted to shed light on the students' motivation and opinions toward the use of SNS and educational platforms like Moodle in learning during the pandemic. It attempted to give an in-depth look at e-learning in the Algerian context. The current study was limited to a small sample of EFL learners in Saida University. Still,

researchers could take it as a roadmap to conduct more research, mainly on the use of formal educational platforms, and new applications like Zoom and Google Classroom.

Technology becomes an essential ingredient in the teaching process. Teachers have to cope with the advancement of technology and language teaching. Indeed, it becomes a duty for teachers to do that because the teaching and learning processes are affected by the students' attitudes and motivation. Hence, students are the most influential factor in the learning process. Besides, teachers and students can employ Facebook and Moodle as complementary tools. Students can use Facebook to foster peer communication, interaction, and share information. They can also employ Moodle to get teachers' feedback. In the EFL context in Saida, Facebook proves its efficacy as the first tool for learning and administrative announcements. Hence, if teachers need to inform their students, they have to search for them on Facebook and then they can use educational platforms.

The Covid-19 pandemic sheds light on many educational systems that limit the learning and teaching process to the closed walls of the classroom. Institutions, universities, and teachers have to cope with their students' motivation and attitudes. They have also to benefit from the blessings of technology that has encouraged both synchronous and asynchronous learning. It can also make the learning and teaching atmosphere more enjoyable where both teachers and learners can meet virtually, and share knowledge from their homes. Indeed, the current situation has pushed many institutions to reconsider their educational systems.

Most of the results showed that students benefited from educational platforms like Moodle and are more motivated to use in the learning process. They also showed positive attitudes toward the use of SNS in informal settings, mainly Facebook and YouTube. The results also revealed that the learners are also eager to include new applications to the classroom environment like Zoom and Google Classroom. The analysis also demonstrated that the classroom environment and the use of handouts are essential in the learning process. They can employ SNS, Moodle, and Google Classroom/Zoom to complete the learning process, motivate students to learn, and strengthen the teacher-learner relation.

The use of educational platforms or SNS and even new applications like Google Classroom is not enough i.e., the teaching and learning process is not complete without the teacher's role as an active participant and students' motivation. The core of these tools is to develop the student's self-learning and promote creativity.

Algeria is trying to promote e-learning through creating educational platforms, and training teachers to cope with advances in teaching and technology. It also provides materials to enhance the learning process. However, all the initiatives remain uncomplete without the teachers' and learners' motivation and attitudes toward changing the learning and teaching rigid in the classroom. The obstacles that faced teachers, administration, and students during the pandemic have critically unveiled the status of teaching/learning that needs to be under the lens. The Covid-19 pandemic gives a chance for instructors and researchers to test the usefulness of what technology has provided. Although teachers developed negative attitudes toward SNS like Facebook and its use, they realized that it is the first favoured tool among learners since it

provides peer-to-peer feedback and the sense of a social community. On the other side of the corner, Moodle, as an official educational platform, provides a safe environment where the information was prepared and uploaded by their teachers, i.e., it offers teacher-to-student feedback. Therefore, recognizing the tremendous benefits, technology becomes a necessity for teachers and institutions.

Recommendations

The current study presents a set of recommendations that can help in integrating e-learning in the EFL context:

- Universities should focus on training teachers and learners to use ICT in the classroom through seminars and workshops to promote professionalism, mainly on the use of new platforms like Moodle and applications like Google Classroom or Zoom.
- Teachers should develop positive attitudes toward the use of SNS in learning, mainly Facebook. They should encourage students to use it for educational and social purposes. They should make a balance in using Facebook.
- Universities should create more language laboratories and integrate the use of new applications like Google Classroom and Zoom seminars, workshops, conferences, and study days by inviting teachers from other universities.
- Teachers should use technology to teach all modules in the EFL context in general.
- Teachers should include SNS platforms like YouTube as a supplementary tool to change the students' motivation toward the use of handouts in learning.
- Institutions should raise the students' awareness to employ SNS for teaching and learning purposes.

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