

# Online Learning via Microsoft TEAMS During the Covid-19 Pandemic as Perceived by Kuwaiti EFL Learners

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## Abstract

Covid-19 pandemic made a sudden shift of all ages to online learning and distance learning instructions. However, there is a paucity of research to address the possible impacts of the pedagogical shift integrated into new online platforms on learning, interaction, and assessment, especially in higher education settings from the vantage point of EFL students. Framed in a descriptive quantitative study, the main objective of this study includes two folds: a) to identify the possible effects of online learning via Microsoft TEAMS platform during the COVID-19 pandemic on assessment, interaction, and learning English as a foreign language from EFL students' perception and b) to reveal the possible significant correlation between learning, interaction and online assessment via Microsoft TEAMS. Data were collected using a developed questionnaire consisting of 30 items focusing on three dimensions: interaction, learning, and assessment among 440 EFL students whose major was English at the College of Basic Education in Kuwait. At the significance level of 0.01, the results revealed the effect of online learning via Microsoft TEAMS during the COVID-19 pandemic on learning of English skills, students' interaction and achievement assessment as perceived by the EFL students in the English Language Department in the CBE was rather high, moderate and moderate and moderate respectively. There is a strong/high statistically significant correlation between Interaction and Assessing ( $r = 0.538$ ), interaction and Learning ( $r = 0.747$ ). There is a statistically significant moderate correlation between Assessing and Learning ( $r = 0.467$ ). This study is of some pedagogical and assessment ramifications for EFL contexts in the pandemic era.

**Keywords:** EFL online learning, microsoft teams, assessment, online interaction course evaluation, Covid-19 pandemic, higher education, program effectiveness, Kuwait

## 1. Introduction

Due to the global health emergency to the Covid-19 pandemic in March 2020, various educational settings, including universities, were required to make a sudden shift in delivering teaching-learning strategies to meet their educational agenda. Indeed, as a consequence of the global pandemic, education, and in turn, language education around the globe, welcomed a transitional stage from traditional face-to-face classes to online classes. This so-called crisis urged a global lockdown against the pandemic spread so that many educational settings resorted to remote learning (Aghaei, Rajabi, Lie, & Ajam, 2020). Covid-19 pandemic, similar to many global historical events, seems to have a significant impact on higher education so that The New York Times, a newspaper with worldwide influence and readership, raise a provoking question in its issue "Will the Coronavirus Forever Alter the College Experience?" (Marcus, 2020).

Emerging any major pedagogical change requires many educational stakeholders to consider potential advantages and disadvantages associated with their design decision on transitioning from in-class learning to online and integrating web-based content delivery systems (e.g., Blackboard, Moodle, Canvas, Microsoft Teams, to name a few) to replace the sudden shift to online learning after the campuses closed within one month in higher institutes. In keeping with this, there is a growing body of literature that recognizes the importance of investigating how the campus closures and subsequent pivot to remote teaching and online teaching affected faculty members' and students' attitudes and beliefs on online teaching (Aghaei, Ghoorchaie, Rajabi, &

Ayatollahi, 2022; Asanjarani & Arslan, 2021).

As a result, the teaching effectiveness of online platforms in educational settings has become one particular concern from the grassroots experiences besides its significant role since the beginning of the new millennium (Aghaei et al., 2020). The research literature has shown that such an approach will create economics of scale and make higher education more affordable for various educational stakeholders such as teachers and learners (Cary, 2015; Selingo, 2015). As for its effectiveness, issues such as its practicality, feasibility, flexibility, time, and cost-effectiveness when dealing with large samples and a large amount of data have also been addressed in the literature. These researchers also mention that these programs and hence teaching integrated into new online platforms is also of the potentiality to provide real-time feedback, making it an attractive option that is increasingly replacing paper-and-pencil course evaluations (Aghaei & Gouglani, 2016; Aghaei et al., 2020; Barkhi & Williams, 2010; Dommeyer, Baum, Hanna, & Champan, 2004; Hessius & Johansson, 2015; Layne, Decristoforo, & McGinty, 1999; Nulty, 2008; Riskey, Vaughan, & Murphy, 2015).

As for the effectiveness of online assessment and evaluation, Thambusamy and Singh (2021) used qualitative data to investigate this issue in measuring student learning at the tertiary level in Malaysia. Their research findings indicated that while both formative and summative online assessments help measure student learning. However, in this study, there is no consensus on whether online platforms emerged on the need to institute remedial procedures to mitigate these platforms' limitations in measuring other types of learning that are difficult to capture using online assessment. Stukalina (2012) also investigated student interactions to capture students' perceptions of the online educational services, focusing on student satisfaction and motivation.

During the outbreak of the Coronavirus Pandemic, Alfadley, Aladwani and AlGasab (2021) also investigated the EFL students' readiness level toward implementing E-learning in the College of Basic Education (CBE) in Kuwait. In order to assess the readiness of E-learning of the participants, a 39-item adopted survey was administered. Their findings spelled out that the students have high readiness levels towards E-learning due to their college's online training. Reviewing the literature has shown that what is not yet clear is the impact of the pedagogical shift integrated into new online platforms on learning, interaction, and assessment, especially in higher education settings from the vantage points of EFL students. In order to bridge the gap in the literature, the present study includes two folds a) to identify the possible effects of online learning via Microsoft TEAMS platform during the COVID-19 pandemic on learning English as a foreign language from EFL students' perceptions b) to reveal the possible significant correlation between learning, interaction and online assessment via Microsoft TEAMS.

In so doing, restricting its scope to a specific synchronous platform such as Microsoft Teams and also its participants and settings to the EFL students in teacher preparation program in the College of Basic Education (CBE) in Kuwait, the present study tends to explore how the students in the English language department evaluate their learning of English language skills in online learning via TEAMS platform? How do the EFL students evaluate their interactions in online learning via the TEAMS platform? How do the EFL students evaluate their achievements in assessment in online learning via the TEAMS platform? Is there any significant relationship among learning, interaction, and assessment dimensions of online learning through Microsoft Teams?

## **2. Literature Review**

### *2.1 Covid-19 Pandemic, Digital Technologies and Higher Education*

During the pandemic, many universities worldwide have offered various types of learning and introduced many education programs. One mode of learning is distance learning. The current form of online learning started in (1990) with the advent of the internet and the World Wide Web. This approach makes learning easier for students who do full-time or part-time jobs during the week or daytime. Distance learning also makes managing large classes easier as learning tools and information can be shared through the internet or an intranet. If a student misses a lecture, they can repeat the session anytime and anywhere they want without face-to-face contact with the teacher (Aghaei et al., 2020). In distance learning, the student uses the E-Learning platform to continue their educational program.

Due to the Covid-19 pandemic and the sudden lockdown, many universities provided online programs. The sudden transition sped up the process of digitalization. Some universities began to get the license of various platforms for video conferencing and virtual classrooms besides Blackboard, which was already available. Also, staff members in many higher education institutes tried their best to use all available platforms and applications, including ZOOM, Edmodo, Webex, Google Classrooms, Telegram, WhatsApp, etc. In online education, especially in higher education institutes via mobile computing, cloud computing, usage of social media in

courses, 3D printing, using Apps in education classes, the role of digital technologies was on the rise. The diffusion of digital technologies has created new avenues for developing entrepreneurial projects by leveraging collaboration and collective intelligence (Elia et al., 2020). The advance of digital technologies facilitates the move from traditional face-to-face learning to learning embedded into our daily routines, especially in the education sector. The advancement of mobile technologies and e-learning to support learning (smartphones, tablets, social media) is very progressive and has increased rapidly in developed and developing countries. Therefore, students find it a helpful and practical method to access information and obtain their higher education programs easier (Carcia, Lopez, & Castillo, 2019).

Advocates of online higher education point out that it increases access by lowering costs and bringing education to people who could not attend on-campus programs (Carey, 2016). Kumar, Kumar and Palivia (2019) claimed that online learning in higher education is not merely a passing trend that impacts universities but burgeoning standards in education. Distance learning or online learning has many advantages, such as enabling students to foster their learning, self-direction, and self-dependent modes. Also, teachers can encourage their students to participate and discuss without fear from their classmates, unlike traditional face-to-face classes. In online classes, students can share files, assignments and follow up with their teachers via chat and online programs faster and more efficiently (Ibrahim, Silong, & Samah, 2002). In addition, distance learning has provided many opportunities for part-time students and working staff to complete their studies. Moreover, distance learning saves more money than regular learning (Sadeghi, 2019). In a nother study by Guri-Rosenblit (2018) showed that teachers found preparing for online courses much more time-consuming than the face-to-face classroom.

A further challenge for the academic community in preparing online courses is the issue of intellectual property rights (Guri-Rosenblit, 2018). Skeptics express concerns about the quality of online courses (Allen & Seaman, 2012). They “find plenty to be concerned about, including questions about whether certain courses or certain students are best suited for online. In addition, the concerns cited in research prior to the pandemic about increased workload, cheating, and lack of connection with students were all mentioned frequently” (Watkins, 2021, p. 108).

### *2.2 EFL Learners' Perceptions on Online Education in Kuwait and Other Global Contexts*

The global shift to online learning sparks different reactions among educators in the EFL sector around the world. For example, besides its benefits, some studies spelled out some shortcomings and disadvantages to online learning, which can cause tremendous difficulties for both students and teachers alike. From students' vantage points, these classes often make them isolated and alienated due to their hesitation to participate in online communities. This may stem from personality, sense of transactional distance in the online environment, lack of confidence and trust in the participants in an online community, especially if it was a target language, not his mother tongue like learning English. Also, lack of nonverbal communication (facial expression, voice tone, etc.), connection difficulties (e.g., low internet speed), poor writing skills, or language barriers (see, for example, Rasheed et al., 2019).

Melvina et al. (2020) studied Indonesian undergraduate EFL learners' views on online learning implementation during the Covid-19 outbreaks. The study's findings revealed that Indonesian undergraduate EFL students consciously realize that studying from home and using online learning is the best way during Covid-19 outbreaks. Also, they reported that they faced several obstacles to online learning during the pandemic, such as lack of knowledge and skills in online learning, unstable internet connection, and the teachers' limited experience with online learning. Rahman (2020) also examines EFL learners' perceptions of learning English through mobile during the pandemic in the Saudi Arabia context. This quantitative analysis uncovered healthy and positive perceptions of mobile learning since it promotes physical distancing and flexibility of learning pace and learner motivation. However, there were some adverse claims about the internet connection, lack of prior familiarity with mobile learning, and teacher-student interaction.

In addition, Suadi (2021) studied EFL learners' perceptions of using Zoom and WhatsApp in learning English amidst the Covid-19. The data were collected from 53 undergraduate students through an online questionnaire. Despite some reports on the internet connection, the results were mostly positive since the students viewed online applications as efficient. Sukman & Mhunkongdee (2021) did a qualitative study on Thai EFL undergraduate learners' views of online learning implementation during the Covid-19 outbreaks. The study revealed that students expressed a positive attitude toward online learning during the pandemic. However, they preferred face-to-face classrooms on online learning. Due to the unstable internet connection, teachers' explanations and potential distractions were listed as challenges for English online learning.

In another study, Sutrisna and Utami Dewi (2021) explored the effectiveness of the E-learning of English in an

EFL Indonesian setting. They conducted a qualitative study by interviewing university English instructors sample. The collected data analyzed and found that e-learning was perceived as the use of the internet in accessing the virtual classroom learning to engage the students and lectures into the meaningful English language learning process. E-learning instructions were done into MALL and CALL categories. Findings showed that e-learning instructions were considered the most effective way of conducting learning activities during the Covid-19 pandemic, which gave them a way to make the learning instruction without any physical contact. It was also found that E-learning was contributive and transferring the knowledge could be done effectively. Based on the previous studies, most research on online-learning implementation in EFL settings has not addressed English language skills, interaction level, or the students' achievements level compared to face-to-face learning in an EFL context like Kuwait. Accordingly, we researched to disclose the EFL students' views on their level of achievements and interaction towards implementing online learning during Covid-19 outbreaks in the setting.

### **3. Methodology**

The current research conducted a quantitative study to examine the mean differences of the students' perceptions of 440 EFL students in the English department in the College of Basic Education (CBE), Kuwait on the phenomenon under question, and to reveal the significant relationships between its components, the views raised on it, the processes it includes, as well as the effects that they cause.

#### *3.1 Participants*

The study was carried out during the COVID-19 pandemic and Kuwait's lockdown from February to August 2020. The study sample was students in the College of Basic Education, a wing of Public Authority for Applied Education and Training (PAAET), Kuwait's highest state educational institutes. The College of Basic Education (CBE) is a 4-year full-time teacher training program that includes an English Language department. The participants consisted of 440 EFL randomly selected students from different academic years who had experience with online learning via Microsoft Teams during Covid-19 Pandemic. They were asked to answer the developed questionnaire online.

#### *3.2 Instrument*

The primary tool in this study is a developed 30-item questionnaire with a five-point Likert scale measuring three factors, i.e., learning, interaction, and assessment. Its first two factors, namely learning and interaction, include 16 close-ended questions originally adopted and modified based on Rojabi's (2020) conceptual model. Since the learning factor in this model was very general, the questionnaire was specified by adding and modifying some items on learning English. The interaction factor questions were also modified to become more associated with learning factor questions. Likewise, it is worth noting that in constructing the first two factors in this study, Cakrawati's model (2017) was also used. This underlying framework firstly stressed learning some aspects of the English language and learning in general through 12 close-ended questions in online learning platforms such as Edmodo and Quipper in the classroom.

The researchers also developed the last factor, i.e., assessment, as their specialty was identifying EFL students' achievement evaluation through online assessments. Three experts in the field confirmed the reliability of this questionnaire. In general, the questionnaire finally included 30 questions, with the whole five-point Likert scale. The first, second, and third factors were measured, including ten questions for any defined factor. Cronbach alpha was used to determine the questionnaire validity. Results presented in Table 1 below indicate the acceptable validity of the questionnaire.

##### **3.2.1 The Validity of the Questionnaire**

The validity of the questionnaire was verified based on the following criteria:

#### **A- External validity**

The questionnaire was presented to a group of arbitrators, and it was amended according to their suggestions, as some items were paraphrased. The final form of the questionnaire consisted of (30) items. The arbitrators' consensus asserts the validity of the questionnaire's content.

#### **B- Internal consistency**

In order to confirm the internal consistency of the questionnaire, the correlation coefficients were calculated between each item and the total degree of the axis it belongs to and the total degree of the questionnaire obtained from the exploratory study applied to (60) EFL students. What is mentioned in Appendix A reports the results. As shown in Appendix A and Table 1 below, the correlation values of all items are statistically significant at the

significance level (0.01). The correlations among the items of the first dimension (Interaction) and the total degree of the dimension ranged between (0.372–0.712), and they ranged between (0.346–0.645) with the total degree of the questionnaire. The correlations among the items of the second dimension (Assessing) and the total degree of the dimension ranged between (0.373–0.630), and they ranged between (0.278–0.627) with the total degree of the questionnaire. The correlations among the items of the third dimension (Learning) and the total degree of the dimension ranged between (0.300–0.791), and they ranged between (0.316–0.647) with the total degree of the questionnaire. This asserts the internal consistency and the validity of the structure.

Table 1. Correlations between each dimension and the total degree of the questionnaire

Dimension	Correlations
Interaction	0.901**
Assessing	0.768**
Learning	0.880**

Note. (\*\*) Correlation is significant at the (0.01) level.

Table 1 illustrates that the correlations between each dimension and the total degree of the questionnaire are high and statistically significant at the significance level (0.01), and they ranged between (0.768–0.901), this confirms the internal consistency and the validity of the study.

Table 2. Reliability correlations of questionnaire's dimensions

No.	Dimension	N of Items	Cronbach's Alpha
A	Interaction	10	0.79
B	Assessing	10	0.74
C	Learning	10	0.77
Total		30	0.87

Table 2 indicates that a high statistical Reliability characterizes the dimensions of the questionnaire as the reliability correlations ranged between (0.74–0.79) and the reliability coefficient of the questionnaire as a whole receded (.87). This indicates the high reliability of the questionnaire so it can be generalized to the primary sample of the study, and the results obtained can be reliable.

To determine the degree of effect of online learning via Microsoft TEAMS during Covid-19 pandemic on English language learning according to the five-point scale used in answering the questionnaire items, teachers' responses were categorized into three levels to analyze the results easily using the following equation:

Category length = range ÷ number of levels (high, moderate, low)

Range = greatest value of answer categories (5) – smallest value of answer categories (5 – 1 = 4). Thus, the category length =  $4 \div 3 = 1.33$ , and then add the answer (1.33) to the end of each category. So it will be

A - Minimum =  $1 + 1.33 = 2.33$

B - Average =  $2.34 + 1.33 = 3.67$

C - Maximum = 3.67 or more

The values will be as follows:

- The arithmetic means that ranges between (3.68–5) means that the degree of influence of online learning via Microsoft TEAMS is **high**.
- The arithmetic means that ranges between (2.34–3.67) means that the degree of influence of online learning through Microsoft TEAMS is **moderate**.
- The arithmetic means that ranges between (1.00–2.33) means that the degree of online learning via Microsoft TEAMS is **low**.

### 3.3 Data Collection Procedure

In collecting data, following the distribution of the questionnaires among students, they were asked to answer the questionnaire. Their responses to the questionnaire were used as quantitative data. Descriptive statistics (frequency table, histogram, mean and standard deviation) and inferential statistics (correlation) were used. In

this method, the frequency of responses to each question was multiplied by the factor of agreement (Strongly agree = 5, 4 = agree, 3 = disagree, 4 = rather disagree, and 5 = strongly disagree).

A score was then calculated for each question given the number of questions related to the research questions; the scores were added together, and then the mean and other statistical parameters were calculated. According to the results of the survey, research questions were addressed.

Following online meetings with each course, the instructors of Microsoft office Teams as an official online learning platform during Kuwait's lockdown during the COVID-19 pandemic, the developed questionnaire was written in English. In order to ensure the instrument's external validity, a panel of arbitrators in the field from the College of Basic Education and Kuwait University reviewed the instruments and made some suggestions on some items, and finally endorsed the content validity of the items. In addition, the researchers first conducted a pilot study on 60 EFL learners prior to applying the instrument and later modified the questionnaire based on the reviewers' and the students' feedback. In the developed questionnaire, the frequency of responses to each of the questions was scored using the five-point Likert scale and multiplied in the agreement factor (Strongly agree = 5, 4 = agree, 3 = disagree, 4 = rather disagree 5 = strongly disagree). Having developed the final form of the questionnaire, the researchers sent the final version of the questionnaire as a web link to be distributed among the English Language department in the College of Basic Education (CBE) at PAAET.

#### 4. Results

The research questions of this study were answered using a range of statistical analyses such as frequency, percentages, arithmetic mean, standard deviation, Pearson correlation coefficient via SPSS.

##### 4.1 The First Research Question Findings

To what extent does online learning via Microsoft TEAMS during the Covid-19 pandemic influence learning English skills as perceived by the EFL students in the English Language Department in the CBE? Table 3 below represents the main findings on this research question.

Table 3. Percentages, means, and std. deviations for learning dimension items

No.	Items	Strongly Disagree %	Disagree %	Neutral %	Agree %	Strongly Agree %	Mean	Std. Deviation	Mean by Order	The Effect
1	The posted materials (videos, PowerPoint files, articles, assignments) on Microsoft Teams helped me understand the course content.	3.0	1.8	16.1	35.9	43.2	4.15	0.955	1	High
2	Online activities and discussions through Microsoft Teams motivated me to learn the course material	4.1	5.2	22.5	38.0	30.2	3.85	1.041	3	High
3	Online learning through Microsoft Teams saves effort and time.	3.0	6.1	15.0	30.2	45.7	4.10	1.054	2	High
4	Online learning through Microsoft Teams improves my language skills.	3.9	9.5	26.1	32.5	28.0	3.71	1.091	6	High
5	Online learning through Microsoft Teams improves my English vocabulary	3.9	7.0	28.2	33.6	27.3	3.73	1.056	4	High
10	Online learning through Microsoft Teams makes the course material interesting.	4.3	10.7	25.7	32.7	26.6	3.67	1.109	7	Moderate
7	Online learning through Microsoft Teams increases the effectiveness of my learning.	4.5	10.0	32.0	33.2	20.2	3.55	1.062	8	Moderate
8	I prefer reading course material as a hard copy (book/handout) rather than as an online version.	6.1	19.1	28.9	22.0	23.9	3.38	1.211	9	Moderate
9	I think it is difficult to use Microsoft Teams as a mobile learning application.	17.7	33.4	21.4	16.8	10.7	2.69	1.244	10	Moderate

10	I prefer to continue with online learning through Microsoft Teams in the future, even after the COVID-19 pandemic.	10.7	10.0	15.9	24.1	39.3	3.71	1.355	5	High
the general mean of the theme							3.65	0.644	-	Moderate

The findings of Table 3 below indicate that the degree of influence of online learning via Microsoft TEAMS during Covid-19 pandemic on learning English skills as a whole is moderate since the general arithmetic means for the dimension is (3.65) and the standard deviation is (0.644). As for the arithmetic mean score measured on each item related to this dimension, it can be stated that among ten items defined, six ones got high degrees. These items include items (1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 10) ranging between (3.71–4.15). The responses of the sample individuals on these items vary, and these items came in the following order:

Item No. (1) “The posted materials (videos, PowerPoint files, articles, assignments) on Microsoft Teams helped me understand the course content” got the first rank (M = 4.15). Item No. (3) “Online learning through Microsoft Teams saves effort and time” was second in its rank (M = 4.10). Item No. (2) “Online activities and discussions through Microsoft Teams motivated me to learn the course material” got the third rank (M = 3.85). Item No. (5) “online learning through Microsoft Teams improves my English vocabulary” comes to the fourth rank (M = 3.73). Furthermore, item No. (4), “Online learning through Microsoft Teams improves my language skills,” got the fifth rank (M = 3.71). As for item No. (10), i.e., “I prefer to continue with online learning through Microsoft Teams in the future, even after the COVID-19 pandemic,” arithmetic mean, i.e. (3.71), was measured to place it in the fifth rank.

In addition, as Table 3 indicates, four items out of the ten ones on the learning dimension got a moderate degree. These items are No. (6, 7, 8, 9), the means of which ranged between (2.69–3.67). Such items came in the following order, i.e., item No. (6) “Online learning through Microsoft Teams makes the course material interesting” came to the seventh rank (M = 3.67). Item No. (7) “Online learning through Microsoft Teams increases the effectiveness of my learning” got the eighth rank (M = 3.55). Item No. (8) “I prefer reading course material as a hard copy (book/handout) rather than as an online version” got the penultimate order (M = 3.38). Item No. (9) “I think it is difficult to use Microsoft Teams as a mobile learning application” got the last order (M = 2.69). Although findings reflected the online learning impact of Microsoft TEAMS during the Covid-19 pandemic on English skills, some studies have also indicated that online learning has disadvantages. A few of these disadvantages include isolation and the lack of trust among the participants in an online community, especially with a target language, besides the lack of non-verbal communication (Rasheed et al., 2019). Also, preparing for online teaching takes longer than preparing for face-to-face learning in the classroom (Guri-Rosenblit, 2018).

4.2 The Second Research Question Findings

As for the second research question, i.e., to what extent does online learning via Microsoft TEAMS during the Covid-19 pandemic influence interaction as perceived by the EFL students in the English Language Department in the CBE? Table 4 below represents the main findings on this research question.

Table 4. Percentages, means, and std. deviations for interaction dimension items

No.	Items	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	Mean	Std. Deviation	Order according to mean	The Effect
		%	%	%	%	%				
1	Online learning through Microsoft Teams makes interaction and communication easier between lecturers and students.	5.2	9.1	17.3	37.3	31.1	3.80	1.132	3	High
2	Online learning through Microsoft Teams is convenient to use, especially with submitting homework and assignments.	3.4	2.5	15.9	45.2	33.0	4.02	0.947	1	High

3	Expressing learning concerns to the lecturer through Microsoft Teams is more comfortable than doing so face-to-face.	5.7	12.7	26.1	28.0	27.5	3.59	1.179	6	Moderate
4	Online learning through Microsoft Teams leads to more miscommunication between lecturers and students than in a traditional (face-to-face) classroom.	5.7	18.9	30.9	29.8	14.8	3.29	1.106	9	Moderate
5	Online learning through Microsoft Teams makes interactions between students easier.	4.3	11.4	25.7	37.5	21.1	3.60	1.073	5	Moderate
6	Online learning through Microsoft Teams forms relationships and bonds between students	5.0	18.2	33.0	27.7	16.1	3.32	1.098	8	Moderate
7	Online learning through Microsoft Teams leads to more miscommunication between students than in a traditional (face-to-face) classroom	6.8	28.0	22.7	32.5	10.0	3.11	1.126	10	Moderate
8	Online learning through Microsoft Teams solves interaction issues among students.	2.7	16.4	28.6	36.8	15.5	3.46	1.025	7	Moderate
9	Online learning through Microsoft Teams helps me to improve my grades of participation and interaction in lass compared to a traditional (face-to-face) classroom.	3.4	9.3	20.0	33.9	33.4	3.85	1.092	2	High
10	I prefer to continue online learning through Microsoft Teams in the future, even after the COVID-19 pandemic	12.0	10.0	16.6	25.7	35.7	3.63	1.369	4	Moderate
the general mean of the theme							3.57	0.617	-	Moderate

The findings of Table 4 display the degree of influence of online learning via Microsoft TEAMS during the Covid-19 pandemic on interaction is generally moderate because the total mean of the dimension is (3.57) and the standard deviation is (0.617). Specifically, as for the mean score of each item in this 10-item dimension, three items (1, 9, 2) got a high degree with a mean score between (3.80–4.02). These items in detail came in the following order: Item No. (2) “Online learning through Microsoft Teams is convenient to use, especially with submitting homework and assignments” got the first rank ( $M = 4.02$ ). Item No. (9) “Online learning through Microsoft Teams helps me to improve my grades of participation and interaction in class compared to a traditional (face-to-face) classroom” got the second rank ( $M = 3.85$ ). Item No. (1) “Online learning through Microsoft Teams is convenient to use, especially with submitting homework and assignments” came into the third rank ( $M = 3.80$ ). Likewise, seven items, including item no. (3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 10) means ranged between (3.11–3.63) got a moderate degree. The responses of the sample individuals on these items varied, and these items came in the following order: Item No. (10) “I prefer to continue online learning through Microsoft Teams in the future, even after the COVID-19” got the fourth rank ( $M = 3.63$ ). Item No. (5) “Online learning through Microsoft Teams makes interactions between students easier” got fifth rank ( $M = 3.60$ ). Item No. (4) “Online learning through Microsoft Teams leads to more miscommunication between lecturers and students than in a traditional (face-to-face) classroom” got the penultimate order ( $M = 3.29$ ). Item No. (7) “Online learning through Microsoft Teams solves interaction issues among students” got the last order ( $M = 3.11$ ).

#### 4.3 The Third Research Question Findings

As for the third research question, i.e., to what extent does online learning via Microsoft TEAMS during the Covid-19 pandemic influence assessment achievement perceived by the EFL students in the CBE? Table 5 below represents arithmetic means, and standard deviations of the responses of the study sample individuals regarding assessment dimension items were calculated

Table 5. Percentages, means, and STD. deviations for assessment dimension items

No.	Items	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	Mean	Std. Deviation	Order according to mean	The Effect
		%	%	%	%	%				
1	Online assessments (Tests and quizzes) through Microsoft Teams reduces the amount of time given for taking quizzes and tests.	3.9	9.3	29.8	32.3	24.8	3.65	1.070	2	Moderate
2	Online assessments through Microsoft Teams are harder than traditional paper assessments.	10.9	31.1	22.0	22.5	13.4	2.96	1.229	9	Moderate
3	I do better on online assessments through Microsoft Teams compared to traditional paper assessments	4.8	13.4	25.0	34.3	22.5	3.56	1.120	3	Moderate
4	Online assessments through Microsoft Teams added stress and anxiety on my performance in assessments.	10.5	22.7	25.2	24.8	16.8	3.15	1.244	8	Moderate
5	During online assessments through Microsoft Teams, I use helpful reference materials) books-notes-handouts).	5.5	11.8	27.3	38.0	17.5	3.50	1.080	4	Moderate
6	During online assessments through Microsoft Teams, I use search engines such as Google or Yahoo.	10.2	16.6	23.6	35.2	14.3	3.27	1.196	6	Moderate
7	During online assessments through Microsoft Teams, I get help from another person.	22.0	39.1	18.4	13.2	7.3	2.45	1.179	10	Moderate
8	During online assessments through Microsoft Teams, I face a lot of technical problems	6.6	22.3	28.2	28.2	14.8	3.22	1.146	7	Moderate
9	I prefer to continue assessments through Microsoft Teams in the future, even after the COVID-19 pandemic.	6.4	10.9	17.7	29.3	35.7	3.77	1.222	1	High
10	My College GPA (Total grades) improved under online learning through Microsoft Teams.	5.0	10.5	33.6	33.0	18.0	3.48	1.059	5	Moderate
the general mean of the theme							3.30	0.560	-	Moderate

Based on Table 5, it is remarkable that the degree of influence of online learning via Microsoft Teams during the COVID-19 pandemic on achievement in assessment as a whole is moderate because the general arithmetic mean for the dimension is (3.30) and the standard deviation is (0.560). Also, it is notable that this dimension includes (10) items and only one of the items, i.e., item No. (9) “I prefer to continue assessments through Microsoft Teams in the future, even after COVID-19 pandemic” came to a significant degree ( $M = 4.77$ ). This result indicates positive attitudes among the sample individuals towards Microsoft Teams due to the benefits they gained by online assessment. The benefits could be related to the better scores that they can gain in online assessment.

Table 5 indicated that the nine items got a moderate degree. These items include No. (1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 10) with means ranging between (2.45–3.65). The responses of the sample individuals to these items varied, and the items came in the following order: Item (1) “Online an assessment (Tests and quizzes) through Microsoft Teams reduces the amount of time given for taking quizzes and tests” got the second rank ( $M = 3.65$ ). Item No. (3) “I do better on online assessments through Microsoft Teams compared to traditional paper assessments” got the third rank ( $M = 3.56$ ). Item No. (5) “During online assessments through Microsoft Teams, I use helpful reference materials (books-notes-handouts)” got the fourth rank ( $M = 3.50$ ). This result also indicates that the sample individuals have positive attitudes towards assessments through Microsoft Teams. Item No. (2) “Online assessments through Microsoft Teams are more difficult than traditional paper assessments” got the penultimate

order ( $M = 2.96$ ). Item No. (7) “During online assessments through Microsoft Teams, I get help from another person,” got the last order ( $M = 2.45$ ). See table 6 below.

Table 6. Means and standard deviations of the Degree of Influence of Online learning via Microsoft TEAMS on dimensions of the questionnaire as a whole

Dimension	Mean	Std. Deviation	Order according to mean	The Effect
Interaction	3.57	0.617	2	Moderate
Assessing	3.30	0.560	3	Moderate
Learning	3.65	0.644	1	Moderate
Total	3.51	0.518	-	Moderate

Table 6 illustrates that the degree of influence of online learning via Microsoft TEAMS during the Covid-19 pandemic on learning English as a whole is moderate, as the general mean of the questionnaire as a whole is (3.51) and the standard deviation is (0.518). All dimensions as a whole get a moderate degree and come in the following order: Learning came in the first order ( $M = 3.65$ ), followed by Interaction ( $M = 3.57$ ), and finally Assessing ( $M = 3.30$ ).

#### 4.4 The Fourth Question Result findings

What follows addresses the fourth research question, i.e., whether there is any significant relationship among learning, interaction, and assessment dimensions of online learning through Microsoft Team.

In order to reveal the strength of the relationship using the Pearson Correlation coefficient, the following rule was taken into account.

- The correlation is considered low if the correlation value ranges between (.100– .290).
- The correlation is considered moderate if the correlation value ranges between (.300– .490).
- The correlation is considered high if the correlation value ranges between (.500– .001).

Table 7. Correlations among learning, interaction, and assessment

Dimension	Interaction	Assessing	Learning
Interaction	1	0.538**	0.747**
Assessing	0.538**	1	0.467**
Learning	0.747**	0.467**	1

Note. \*\* Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Based on Table 7, it is evident that there is a strong/high statistically significant correlation at the significance level (0.01) between Interaction and Assessing ( $r = 0.538$ ), interaction and Learning ( $r = 0.747$ ). There is a statistically significant moderate correlation between Assessing and Learning ( $r = 0.467$ ).

## 5. Discussion

A body of studies has reported positive outcomes of online learning compared with traditional “face-to-face” classes. The American Department of Education (USDOE, 2010) meta-analysis of online learning studies found that students who studied online classes performed better than those taking the same course in a traditional format.

Similar to the main trend of recent literature, our result also indicates that online learning through Microsoft Teams motivates EFL students to learn in general as it helps them to understand the content. It also contributes us to save time when learning. This result strongly accords Sutrisna and Utami Dewi’s (2021) findings on the effectiveness of E-learning of English as a foreign language. In addition, this result is in concordance with Suadi’s (2021) study in which he revealed that English language learners viewed online applications effectively based on time, place, and expenses. In addition, this result is consistent with those studies indicating online learning is of many advantages. For example, Alfadley et al. (2021) reported that students are of high levels of readiness towards E-learning due to the received training in an online setting before resuming their online study in Kuwait higher education.

The results indicate that online learning through Microsoft Teams motivates EFL students to learn English and understand the content more effectively. In addition, it saves time and effort when learning English. Meanwhile,

our findings align with those of Sutrisna and Utami Dewi (2021) on the effectiveness of E-learning of English as a foreign language (Saudi, 2021). Likewise, the findings were consistent with several studies that indicated that online learning has many advantages. Ibrahim, Silong and Samah (2002) similarly showed that students in these classes can enhance their learning and self-direction and that teachers can encourage their students to participate and discuss without any fear of their classmates, unlike traditional face-to-face classes. Sadeghi (2019) also illustrated that distant learning provides opportunities for students and workers willing to accomplish their learning process. The findings of this study differ from those of Melvina et al. (2020), who stated that learners of English as a foreign language (EFL) faced many obstacles while learning online during the Covid-19 Pandemic, such as lack of knowledge and skills of online learning, as well as teachers' limited experience with online learning.

Furthermore, our results contradict some results with Western contexts to evaluate American students in North American Universities toward online learning during the pandemic. Dissimilar to our findings, Garris and Fleck (2020) found that most higher education students in American universities had negatively evaluated online learning because it was less enjoyable, decreased learning value, facilitated less attention and effort, and brought more computer anxiety. Our findings align with previous studies that highlighted the effectiveness of online learning on the Middle Eastern sample. For example, in his study, Alabay (2018) investigated the effectiveness of the Teams program on Turkish EFL students. He concluded that distance learning and online assessments are more effective than a traditional classroom. Our study results also show that EFL students improve their language skills and English vocabulary in online learning through Microsoft Teams.

This study's findings are consistent with Alameri et al. (2020), who reviewed Jordanian students' perceptions on using different platforms in relation to self-study and their academic achievements during the pandemic. They similarly found out that educational platforms like Moodle, Zoom & Microsoft Teams have an apposite effect on the learners' self-study skills and academic achievements. Moreover, it can reflect that the online learning platforms can contribute to practicing language skills, acquiring new vocabularies, and improving their understanding of the lesson's contents (Cakrawati, 2017). The findings of this study also accord Alameri et al. (2020), Silong and Samah's (2002) studies. Teachers encourage students' participation and more collaboration without fear of their classmates, unlike traditional face-to-face classes, on enhancing learning and self-direction.

Thus, the result of the current study contradicts those of Melvina et al. (2020), who stated that learners of English as a foreign language (EFL) faced many obstacles while learning online during the Covid-19 Pandemic, such as lack of knowledge and skills of online learning, as well as teachers' limited experience with online learning. Meanwhile, results showed that EFL students improve their language skills and English vocabulary, specifically in online learning through Microsoft Teams. Several reasons can contribute to this finding. One of them could be related to the global access to the educational recourses in the English language via the internet. One more reason related to online learning platforms is to practice language skills, acquire new vocabularies, and improve their understanding of the lesson's contents (Alabay, 2018). Another reason, as Suadi (2021) reported, online learning improves language skills and reduces shyness in a virtual class.

Furthermore, preparing for online teaching takes longer than preparing for face-to-face learning in the classroom (Guri-Rosenblit, 2018). Moreover, distance learning has provided part-time students and working staff opportunities to save more money than regular learning (Sadeghi, 2019). As Al-Fraihat et al. (2020) argues, students in online learning settings achieve an increased awareness of the usefulness and advantages of this learning mode. Similar to many studies (see, for example, Ibrahim Silong & Samah, 2002; Sadeghi, 2019; Saudi, 2021), the findings in this study indicated that learning through Microsoft Teams is suitable to be used by female EFL students who majored in English, as it is contributive to improve their participation and interaction scores in the classroom. Indeed, it facilitates communication and interaction among students themselves and between students and faculty members as well. This study also asserts other advantages of learning via Microsoft Teams, such as facilitating interaction among students. However, its disadvantages include miscommunication among students when compared to traditional classrooms. Our study's result comes in agreement with those of Sukman and Mhunkongdee (2021), which indicated that EFL learners preferred face-to-face classes to online learning.

Although the result for online assessment indicates a moderately positive view about online assessment, some advantages of online assessments as EFL students believe that the time allotted for quizzes and tests is reduced compared to traditional tests. However, this does not seem to be a big problem for the participants as a result showed that they get help from others and use helpful reference materials during online assessments. Still, these views should be read with some caution. Hence, there should be valid tools for future evaluation when facing this problem to assure that assessments reflect the actual level of students' academic achievement level. Our view is consistent with other studies in the same region that investigated EFL students' perceptions on online

learning and reported cheating in distance learning. They concluded that EFL learners in one Saudi College: “the majority of Female students were cheating and admitted cheating by helping each other, correcting answers to all their classmates, and employed websites to copy and paste the tests answers onto the tests screens.”

It should be mentioned that the interaction through Microsoft TEAMS facilitated the learning of the sample and encouraged them to learn. The results of the second question indicated that learning through Microsoft Teams is suitable to be used by EFL students so that it helps them improve their self-study skills, grades, participation, and interaction in the classroom. This result aligned with Alahmadi and Alraddadi (2020), who found that there was a good degree of communication and interaction among Saudi EFL students in virtual classes, and they also found a positive attitude towards using online for English classes. Besides, it accords to Hamouda’s (2020) findings that students are digital natives who prefer to interact and socialize online. Therefore, online learning can be an engaging vehicle for education. It was clear from the results that there is a significant correlation between the three subscales of this instrument (interactions, assessment, and learning dimension). The students’ sample indicated that the more interaction between the students on TEAMS, the more benefits and satisfying level with the online learning via TEAMS platform and more trust in the way they were evaluated & assessed. Meanwhile, the students expressed a very positive correlation between the learning and assessment dimensions, which means that the more interaction, the more learning and the more trusted positively with the assessment dimension.

This result should be analyzed with some reservations. The learners found assessment easiness due to its fewer pressures than face-to-face assessment. The Online assessment was more accessible due to the availability of sources like textbooks or classmates helping them during tests, unlike in-class assessment where the teacher is present in class. Also, Saleh and Meccawy (2021) studied the cheating factor among EFL Saudi students in online programs. They defined it as a cultural factor that students should help their classmates in distance learning programs. In addition, the researchers argued that distance learning encourages the students to cheat and send answers to all their classmates as the majority of the female sample admitted that in the employed websites, they copy and paste the answers on the test screen.

## 6. Conclusion

The present study sheds light on Kuwait EFL students’ perceptions and evaluation of online learning via Microsoft Teams platform during the Covid-19 pandemic. The participants were very conscious of the use of Microsoft Teams platforms. They also reported moderate views on online learning via the Microsoft TEAMS platform by Kuwaiti students. The study also found other advantages of learning via Microsoft Teams, such as facilitating positive interaction among students, increasing learning the foreign English language, improving the language skills, and practical assessment.

As for the effectiveness of online instructions, it is important to consider the characteristics of students and the broader situation in which this education took place. In contrast to many western studies, which indicated the impact of online learning negatively due to the less learning value, less enjoyable, more computer anxiety (Dixon et al., 2017; Garris & Fleck, 2020; Asanjarani et al., 2021), the findings of the current study found the effectiveness of online learning, interaction, and assessment positively. Still, these results should be taken cautiously due to the obtained final grades when the students resume studying online during the COVID-19 pandemic. Alluding many reports released by educators, the Kuwaiti teachers Association, and many parents complaining through the Parliaments members, Ministry of Education officers, and media discussion on the fake achievement results, the scores may not reflect the actual academic level of the learners during the online assessments. Saleh and Meccawy (2021) also raised the same concerns in other studies from the same region.

## 7. Limitations

One main limitation of this study was that it did not include the faculty instructors’ perspectives. Having students’ and instructors’ voices on this mode of learning are important and provide more insights. Another limitation of this study was its female participants. In Kuwait College of Basic Education and the English department, students are being accepted among mainly female students due to the feminization policy in the Ministry of Education for all primary school teachers in Kuwait government schools. Including male participants will add more insight to the study results in the future.

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## Appendix A

### Correlations Between Items and Total Degree of the Dimension and the Questionnaire

No.	Correlation between items and Dimension total	Correlation between items and questionnaire total
a1	0.691**	0.618**
a2	0.571**	0.499**
a3	0.650**	0.542**
a4	0.427	0.346
a5	0.712**	0.640**
a6	0.670**	0.585**
a7	0.372**	0.370**
a8	0.669**	0.616**
a9	0.677**	0.607**
a10	0.681**	0.645**
b1	0.457**	0.450**
b2	0.373**	0.344**
b3	0.461**	0.593**
b4	0.433**	0.332**
b5	0.592**	0.523**
b6	0.630**	0.434**
b7	0.566**	0.287**
b8	0.405**	0.399*
b9	0.428**	0.627**
b10	0.520**	0.602**
c1	0.679**	0.601**
c2	0.745**	0.641**
c3	0.629**	0.543**
c4	0.791**	0.688**
c5	0.763**	0.668**
c6	0.740**	0.634**
c7	0.737**	0.647**
c8	0.308*	0.316**
c9	0.300*	0.387**
c10	0.609**	0.622**

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